

Francis Almond

7/1/2150

1898







Sts Augustinus



THE LIFE

OF

ST. AUGUSTINE OF CANTERBURY,

APOSTLE OF THE ENGLISH.

WITH

Some Account of the Early British Church.

MANSUETI HÆREDITABUNT TERRAM, ET DELECTABUNTUR IN
MULTITUDINE PACIS.

LONDON:

JAMES TOOVEY, 192, PICCADILLY.

1845.

LONDON:
Printed by S. & J. BENTLEY, WILSON, and FLEY,
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.

CONTENTS.

CHAP.	PAGE
I. The British Church.—Its first Teachers	1
II. The British Church.—King Lucius	12
III. The British Church.—St. Alban, and the Fruits of his Martyrdom	19
IV. The British Church.—Visits to St. Germanus.....	25
V. The British Church.—Its Degeneracy and Afflictions	41
VI. St. Gregory the Great, the Spiritual Father of England	47
VII. St. Gregory the Great	56
VIII. King Ethelbert and Queen Bertha	64
IX. St. Augustine ; his Journey through France	70
X. St. Augustine in Thanet	89
XI. St. Augustine in Canterbury	101
XII. Munificence of Ethelbert.—First Anglo-Saxon Churches and Monasteries	115
XIII. Monastery of St. Augustine	127
XIV. Mission of St. Mellitus and his Companions	145
XV. Questions and Answers on the English Church	154
XVI. Letters of St. Gregory to Ethelbert and Bertha	173
XVII. The Pall	182
XVIII. The Archiepiscopal Progress.....	187
XIX. St. Augustine.—His Miracles and their Evidence	194
XX. First Panbrittanic Conference	205
XXI. Second Conference	221
XXII. St. Augustine.—His Latter Years	235
XXIII. St. Augustine.—His Death	243
XXIV. Posthumous Miracles.—Conclusion	247



ADVERTISEMENT.

THE author is sorry that illness and other similar causes have obliged him to delay the publication of the Second Part of this Life very much indeed beyond the time at which he had hoped that it might have appeared.

He ought, perhaps, to add likewise, that it has been in part written under circumstances of a public and private nature, more or less disadvantageous towards the calm thought and continuous attention which are due to a subject so solemn as the Life of a Saint.

He takes this opportunity of expressing his thanks to a writer in the *Christian Remembrancer* of July last, as well for the kind and considerate tone of his criticisms upon the former portion of this Life, as for his observations upon one or two historical matters, which the author will not fail to reconsider and re-examine in the event of another edition of the Life being published.

While the sheets are passing through the press, the Librarian of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, has obligingly mentioned that in the Library of that Society are contained two manuscripts of the Gospels, said to have been sent by St. Gregory to St. Augustine, which the author regrets that time does not allow him to investigate. He has just heard also that there is a similar MS. in the Bodleian, which had escaped the

notice of the kind friend to whose researches in that library he is so much indebted.

The pressure under which this Part of the Life of St. Augustine has been necessarily completed, must also be urged as an apology for the omission of all minute reference to Gocelin's Narrative of his Translation. As that Treatise, however, extends to St. Augustine's immediate successors in the See of Canterbury, an opportunity of supplying the omission may, it is hoped, present itself in a future Number of the Series.

THE LIFE OF
St. Augustine,

ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY, APOSTLE OF THE ENGLISH.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRITISH CHURCH.—ITS FIRST TEACHERS.

A.D. 51—A.D. 182.

NEVER was the face of a country more speedily and entirely changed than was that of our own island by the inroads of its Saxon conquerors in the fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian æra. Secular historians have recounted how those fierce invaders swept all before them like a torrent ; drove the ancient people of the land into its farthest recesses, or compelled them to take shelter behind its mountain fastnesses ; establishing themselves in the places which they had laid waste, and demolishing with ruthless hands the comely fabric of civilization and social order which had been gradually growing up in Britain since its subjugation to the Roman power.

They, meanwhile, who read the history of their country with a Christian and Catholic eye, will regard with an interest, such as no mere record of political changes and worldly reverses can inspire, the effect of this sudden and mighty revolution upon the religious condition

and destinies of Britain. To them, the contest between the aboriginal inhabitants of the island and their impetuous conquerors, if contest it can be called, where the parties were so unequally matched in numbers and resources, will seem chiefly memorable, not as it was a trial of human strength, or a struggle for national ascendancy, but as it was a war of extermination waged by a heathen people against one which, however miserably debased in practice, was yet, in name and privilege, Christian. The Church, which had dislodged, by little and little, one vast system of idolatry, was now in turn to be herself displaced by another, less compact and imposing indeed, but not less wicked. Our own venerable historian, St. Bede, in describing the religious consequences of this great national visitation (for such he accounts it), speaks of "buildings public and private, levelled to the ground; priests everywhere massacred at the very altars; and prelates with their flocks swept away by fire and sword."¹ It seemed like a new fulfilment of the prophet's words: "Ascendit contra eam gens ab Aquilone, quæ ponet terram ejus in solitudinem: et non erit qui habitet in eâ ab homine usque ad pecus, et moti sunt, et abierunt."² Thus was heathenism once more dominant in the land which had been trodden by saintly footsteps, and watered by Martyrs' blood.

It is true that our Lord did not, even in this gloomy interval, leave Himself without witness in Britain; and so gave a pledge that He still watched over it, and would one day come to its help. Yet the prospects of His Church in this our island, during the period to which we are referring, were to human eyes sufficiently

¹ S. Bede, Hist. Eccl. Gent. Ang. lib. i. c. 15.

² Jer. L. 3.

dismal. The land, in its length and breadth, was over-spread by darkness ; gross, palpable darkness. The light of God's Lamp, though not extinct, was pent up where it could not be seen ; the Church, whose place is everywhere, was, in England, imprisoned within fixed, and, for all that appeared, impassable, barriers ; it was but coextensive with the now shrivelled boundaries of the ancient British name. As the war drew to a close, and the aboriginal islanders resigned their former possessions into the hands of an enemy whom they could no longer resist, settled heart burnings, and jealousies, of which it is painful even to think, took the place of more active and sanguinary hostilities. Britain was now a nation divided against itself ; and pride and resentment interposed an effectual obstacle to the reconciliation of the conquerors and the conquered within that universal Fold, "where there is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free ;" in which all worldly distinctions are neutralized, and all narrowing prejudices over-ruled.

At this critical juncture, it pleased Almighty God to move the heart of His servant St. Gregory, the first of that name who filled the chair of St. Peter, and, for his eminent virtues, surnamed the Great, with compassion towards our afflicted country ; and to direct hither the steps of that blessed Saint, whose life is to form the subject of these humble pages. Happily for England, she had before established, against this her hour of need, a title to those especial favours which are ever in store for a Church of Martyrs. The seed whose manifold return, how long soever delayed, is never-failing in the end, had already been profusely sown in her own soil. And thus, "after many days," the blood of holy Alban and his companions which had "cried from

the ground" for mercy upon desolate England, was to receive its answer in the mission of a new Apostle to these shores. Even as the blood of Stephen, first heir of his Master's Cross, had its abundant harvest in the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul, did the sufferings of our glorious Protomartyr win for England the pitying regards of St. Gregory and the Apostolic labours of his blessed son in the faith. For many ages St. Alban was accounted the Patron of England, and great national blessings were traced, by religious men of old, to the effect of his death, or looked upon as answers to his continual prayers.³ Nor can we doubt that, among the chief fruits of his sufferings and intercession is to be numbered that gracious interposition of our Lord in behalf of His Church, by which this island was for the second time wrested from the Enemy's grasp, and brought under the healing shade of the True Vine.

Although, then, the ancient Church of Britain presented no visible tokens of life to the eyes of our Saint, upon his landing on English ground, we may not question that the way had been really, though secretly, prepared for him, through the power of Divine Grace manifested in the works and sufferings of those who had preceded him in this scene of his labours. And, accordingly, some notice of the ancient Church of Britain, its origin, rise, and decline, seems a fitting, if not necessary, introduction to the history of one, whose very title to our veneration, as the second Founder of the Church in our island, suggests the grateful remembrance of mercies vouchsafed to Britain in the ages before him. As it is due to his memory, to point out

³ See his Life by the Rev. A. Butler. (June 22.)

how entirely the vestiges of Christ had disappeared from that portion, at least, of the island, into which he was immediately called, and thus how strictly his labours were of a Missionary and Apostolic character ; so does it seem due to theirs, who went before him, to begin our narrative with some connected account of those earlier triumphs of faith, by which his course was smoothed, rather than with the abrupt mention of the degeneracy, which created the necessity for his mission.

The light of the Gospel is believed to have dawned upon Britain as early as the age of the Apostles. St. Bede, indeed, takes no notice of a Church here, till the time of King Lucius, or towards the end of the second century ; but a yet earlier historian, whose name, like his own, is invested with the honours of sanctity, St. Gildas, makes the introduction of Christianity into Britain anterior to a great revolt of the inhabitants, evidently corresponding with that under Boadicea, in A.D. 61.⁴ The same historian appears to direct us for the origin of Christianity in Britain to some epoch midway between a certain great national convulsion, and the abovementioned rise ; and it has been thought that, by the former of these critical events, St. Gildas intends the victory obtained over Caractacus by the Emperor Claudius, in the year of our Lord 51;⁵ as a result of which the British king was taken captive, and carried, with his family and retinue, to Rome. Concurrent with this account of St. Gildas are many ancient traditions which, together with such other proofs as the case admits, seem to make it highly probable, that the introduction of Christianity into Britain was nearly contemporaneous

⁴ S. Gildas de Excid. Brit. § 8, compared with § 6 and § 7.

⁵ Cf. Bp. Burgess' Tracts on the British Church.

with the defeat of Caractacus, and owing to circumstances which sprang out of that event.

Among the captives who were led to Rome in the train of the British king, is said to have been one Claudia Ruffina, a virgin, and, as some suppose, daughter of Caractacus, who was forced to take the name of Claudia, as was not unusual, in compliment to her imperial master. It is related, that this Claudia, while at Rome, became the wife of Pudens, a Senator, with whom St. Peter is said to have lodged, on his first arrival in the City. A certain Claudia, the wife of Pudens, is twice celebrated for her beauty and accomplishments by the poet Martial.⁶ Again, among the salutations in St. Paul's second Epistle to Timothy, written from Rome, we read, "Eubulus greeteth thee, and *Pudens*, and Linus, and *Claudia*."⁷ Hence it has been supposed, and with much apparent probability, that Claudia who has a place in British story became, while at Rome, the disciple of the Blessed Apostles, SS. Peter and Paul, and, interceding with them in behalf of her native country, became the means of its conversion. If St. Gildas be rightly understood to refer that event to some period between A.D. 51, and A.D. 61, his account will appear to corroborate, in a remarkable manner, the tradition which fixes upon the residence of Caractacus at Rome as the first occasion of a religious intercourse between that city and Britain. For the year 58, when some members of the family of the British king returned home, is the precise date assigned by Baronius for St. Paul's arrival at Rome, and for St. Peter's journey into Western Europe.

The names of both those great Apostles are associated

⁶ Mart. lib. 11, ep. 54, and lib. 4, ep. 13.

⁷ 2 Tim. iv. 21.

by divines and antiquaries with the earliest annals of the British Church. That St. Paul visited Britain is very generally asserted, both by Catholic and Protestant authorities; though it must be acknowledged that the *written* testimony in favour of this tradition is anything but conclusive. It is certain, indeed, from the accounts of early writers, that the Apostle of the Gentiles penetrated to the "boundary of the West;"⁸ but some have considered this expression to be satisfied by the fact of his visit to Spain, of which he speaks in his Epistle to the Romans. The historical evidence for St. Peter's Apostolic journey to Britain is scantier still, consisting chiefly in a passage quoted by Metaphrastes (a writer of the tenth century, of whose authority Baronius speaks slightly) from Eusebius, and which is not found in the extant works of that author. Yet it has undoubtedly been long received as a pious opinion by the Church at large, as we learn from some often quoted words of St. Innocent I.⁹, that St. Peter was instrumental in the conversion of the West generally.

⁸ Ἐπὶ τὸ πέρας τῆς δύσεως.

⁹ Quis enim nesciat, aut non advertat, id quod a Principe Apostolorum Petro Romanæ ecclesiæ traditum est, ac nunc usque custoditur ab omnibus debere servari, nec superduci, aut interduci aliquid quod auctoritatem non habeat, aut aliunde accipere videatur exemplum? præsertim cum sit manifestum, in omnem Italiam, Gallias, Hispanias, Africam atque Siciliam, et insulas interjacentes, nullum instituisse Ecclesias nisi eos quos venerabilis Apostolus Petrus aut ejus successores constituerunt sacerdotes? &c. (Epistola Innocentii ad Decentium. Bibliotheca Patrum Vet. tom. viii. p. 586. ed. Venet. 1772.) This letter is dated 19 March, 416.

Bishop Stillingfleet contends (Or. Sac. lib. 3), that this list does not include Britain; yet three pages farther on, in order to show that British Bishops were at the Council of Sardica, he proves that Britain was in early times comprehended under the name of Gaul. See the passage.

And this sort of argument, although it ought to be kept quite distinct from documentary and historical proof, and will form no substitute for such proof with those who stipulate for something like legal accuracy in inquiries of this nature, will not be without its effect upon devout minds, accustomed to rest in the thought of God's watchful guardianship over His Church. The tradition of St. Peter's immediate, or intimate, connexion, with the British Church, has been combated almost universally by Protestant writers; indeed, it is much to be lamented, that this and other like questions of fact should too often have been forced out of their proper department as mere subjects of history, and invested with a grave theological importance which does not surely belong to them. In the present instance, it is impossible not to feel, with all the respect undoubtedly due to the names of those who have taken part on both sides of this controversy, that the historical testimony to the fact of St. Peter's Apostolical visit to Britain has been as unduly pressed by writers on the affirmative side, as what may be called the moral and theological proof of it has been commonly undervalued on the other. It ought, however, to be mentioned, both to the credit of the particular writer himself, and as important to the fact in dispute, that a learned and zealous Protestant, Dr. Hales, considers the visit of St. Peter to Britain to furnish the most satisfactory of all clues to the solution of an intricate chronological problem.¹

Three other members of the Sacred College, besides St. Peter, are said by some to have preached the Gospel in Britain; viz. :—St. James the Greater, St. Philip, and

¹ Vide Dr. Hales's Analysis of Sacred Chronology, vol. ii. pt. 10.

St. Simon Zelotes ; but without a shadow, as far as appears, even of plausibility. St. Simon is reported to have come to this country, after preaching the Faith in Mauritania, and other parts of Africa. But it seems very doubtful whether St. Simon preached even in Africa, for his mission was to the East ; and, if he did, he certainly returned into the East ; for all the ancient Martyrologies place his martyrdom in Persia. And, as to St. James the Greater, and St. Philip, both of these Apostles suffered martyrdom too early to have been concerned in the foundation of the British Church ; St. James in 43, or 44, and St. Philip ten years only afterwards. Therefore, as the learned Archbishop Ussher observes, the question lies, in fact, between St. Peter and St. Paul. St. Peter is believed to have come to Britain, A.D. 60 ; St. Paul, to have set out on his Western journey in the following year, and to have reached Britain about A.D. 62.²

Other holy men who are thought to have visited our island in the Apostolic age, are St. Joseph of Arimathæa, and St. Aristobulus, of whom the latter is said, but apparently upon very slender grounds, to have been consecrated by St. Paul to the first British bishopric. The tradition which brings St. Joseph of Arimathæa to Britain about the year of our Lord (according to Baronius) 63, is defended by the Protestant archbishops, Ussher and Parker, though by the latter in a spirit of very marked hostility to the special prerogatives of St. Peter. St. Joseph of Arimathæa was venerated in the ancient English Church as the founder, and first abbot, of the celebrated Monastery of Avallonia, afterwards Glastonbury, where are still to be seen the ruins

² Alford, *Annales*, ad ann.

of a chapel dedicated to Almighty God under his tutelage. Here, again, if we are to go by external, documentary, and generally available proof, it must be acknowledged that Mr. Collier, in his *Ecclesiastical History*,³ has made out a strong case against the tradition in question. Yet even after the credit of title-deeds and charters has been shaken, is it easy for reverent minds to conceive that such a belief, if unfounded, would have been allowed to grow up, and entwine itself, as it were, round the hearts of men, bound together by the most solemn obligations, and for the most sacred objects, and that for successive generations, so as to enter into their formal proceedings and be expressed in their most durable monuments? It is surely one thing to admit that such a tradition is not *proveable*, and quite another to say that it is worthless. Upon what evidence do we put faith in the existence of St. George, the Patron of England? Upon such, assuredly, as an acute critic or skilful pleader might easily scatter to the winds; the belief of prejudiced or credulous witnesses, the unwritten record of empty pageants and bauble decorations. On the side of scepticism might be exhibited a powerful array of suspicious legends and exploded acts. Yet after all, what Catholic is there but would count it a profaneness to question the existence of St. George? Grounds of this kind, however, are evidently quite distinct from external, tangible, argumentative, proof.⁴

From the testimony of St. Gildas we learn, that

³ Book i. cent. 1.

⁴ Of course the instance is meant as an illustration merely, not a parallel. It is not denied that every Catholic has stronger reason for believing in the existence of St. George than in the visit of St. Joseph of Arimathæa to Britain.

Christianity, though early established in Britain, made comparatively little progress among the inhabitants till it received a new impulse in the persecution under Diocletian.⁵ But while St. Gildas distinctly attests the fact that Christianity, when once brought into Britain maintained its ground without interruption, the records of its progress during the first and greater part of the second century are extremely meagre and unsatisfactory. Even tradition itself is silent upon the annals of this period, except in two particulars ; the one, a mission to Pope Clement, in the year 100, upon liturgical questions ; the other, an accession to the Church of Britain, about forty years later, of certain doctors and scholars of Granta.

⁵ “Quæ licet ab incolis tepide suscepta sint, apud quosdam tamen integre, et apud alios minus, usque ad persecutionem Diocletiani tyranni novennem.” De Excid. Brit. § 9.

CHAPTER II.

THE BRITISH CHURCH.—KING LUCIUS.

A. D. 182—A. D. 192.

THE second great epoch in British Church History is the conversion of king Lucius, which, though the date has been much canvassed, is supposed by competent authorities to have taken place about A.D. 182. The truth of this circumstance undoubtedly rests upon a firmer basis of evidence than that of some among the foregoing details, and it finds a remarkable concurrence of authority, Protestant as well as Catholic, in its favour. The fact, as related by St. Bede the Venerable, was as follows :—"In the 156th¹ year from our Lord's Incarnation, Marcus Antoninus Verus, the fourteenth in succession from Augustus, attained the first power in conjunction with his brother, Aurelius Commodus, in whose time, Eleutherius, a holy man, being vested with the pontificate of the Roman Church, Lucius, king of Britain, sent him a letter, praying to be made a Christian by an act of his authority ; the object of which pious entreaty he shortly afterwards obtained ; and the Britons, having received the Faith, kept it whole and undefiled, and in peace and quiet, till the times of Diocletian the Emperor."²

This, as we have already said, is the first mention which St. Bede makes of Christianity in Britain. Taken, however, with the account of St. Gildas, beforementioned,

¹ It must be remembered that St. Bede's chronology is often inaccurate.

² S. Bede, Hist. Eccl. lib. i. c. 4.

his words cannot be thought to imply more than what is universally acknowledged, that the Faith was not openly embraced by the British nation till the days of Lucius.

From sources of greater or less authenticity, we learn that Lucius, though he did not determine upon professing Christianity till towards the close of his life, was no stranger to it in his earlier years. The instrument of his early religious convictions is said by some to have been St. Timothy, one of the four sainted children of SS. Pudens and Claudia.³ A more credible tradition records, that Lucius obtained the rudiments of the Christian faith through the teaching of St. Elvanus, whom some authors suppose to have been one of the aforementioned converts of Granta; but who is generally said to have been a brother of the Monastery of Avallonia. But from whomsoever the good king Lucius derived his first knowledge of the Christian religion, certain it is, that he could not be persuaded to avow it till towards the close of his life, when he had been king nearly sixty years. Several causes are said to have put him upon seeking the grace of eternal life through the Sacraments of the Church. He had now enjoyed ample means of observing the fruits of the Christian religion in the holy lives of its professors. He was no stranger to the doctrine of a Judgement to come, and knew that he must shortly be called away to account for his use of the opportunities vouchsafed him. But the more immediate and constraining motive, under Divine Providence, of his happy resolution, appears to

³ The others were, his brother, St. Novatus, and his sisters SS. Praxedes and Pudentiana, Virgins. See Cressy, Hist. of the Church of Brittany.

have been the great and signal deliverance of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius and all his army by the prayers of the Christian soldiery, the news of which merciful interposition had lately come to Britain, and had produced a powerful impression upon the king's mind ; who, being now fully satisfied in his heart of the Divine original and wonderful effects of that holy creed towards which he had been long favourably disposed, sent for his faithful counsellor Elvanus, and made him a party to his intention of entreating instant admission into the fold of Christ. Desiring, also, to obtain an authoritative rule for the better government of the Church in his kingdom, he resolved upon seeking counsel in his difficulty, and the See of Rome was the quarter to which his thoughts instinctively turned. He chose, as his representatives in this most important mission, Elvanus, and another clergyman named Medwinus, of the province of the Belgæ.⁴ These sacred ambassadors were commissioned to prefer a request that the holy Father, Eleutherius, in whom the Roman pontificate was then vested, would send to Britain persons duly qualified and authorized to instruct the king and his subjects, and to celebrate, and administer to them, the Divine Mysteries. He also desired to be furnished with rules for the government of the British Church, and, as some add, with a transcript of the famous Roman laws, to serve as the basis of a national code. Eleutherius was a prelate of great piety and virtue, as is sufficiently shewn by the place which his name holds in the memory and affections of the Church.⁵ He succeeded St. Soter

⁴ Comprising the present counties of Hants, Wilts, and Somerset.

⁵ He is mentioned in the Calendar on May 26, St. Augustine of Canterbury's day.

in the Supreme Pontificate in 176, and presided over the Church when it was grievously harassed by the blasphemous doctrine of the Montanists. Some suppose that, in the earlier and less dangerous stages of this heresy, the good Pope Eleutherius was led to give it some sort of countenance; but this is denied by others, who ascribe this act of favour not to St. Eleutherius, but to his successor, Victor. At all events, whether the judgement were given by St. Eleutherius or by another, it was revoked upon fuller information.

Different conjectures have been thrown out by learned ecclesiastical antiquaries, upon the probable motives by which king Lucius was actuated in resorting to Rome for the Sacraments of the Church, and for instruction in Christian doctrine; a circumstance rendered the more worthy of remark by the fame of the great St. Irenæus, at that time Bishop of Lyons, through, or near, which city the messengers of Lucius must have passed on their way to Rome. There can be no doubt that, in learning and acquirements, St. Eleutherius, holy man as he was, fell infinitely short of this famous Bishop, who is said by an ancient father, to have been "the most accurate expositor of doctrine in his day." Indeed, there appears absolutely no reason whatever, why king Lucius should have gone farther for advice, which he might have obtained nearer, unless it were that he, or rather the British Church of his time, acknowledged the See of Rome, even at that early age, and when the great spiritual Monarchy of which it afterwards became the centre, was not as yet fully developed, or perfectly organized, as invested with some special prerogatives of rank and authority. And, had the messengers of Lucius paused on their way to consult the great Bishop of Lyons, certainly he would have given them no other advice

than that which he has left on record, when he says, "To the Roman Church, by reason of its more powerful principality, it is necessary that every Church, that is to say, the faithful in every place, should have recourse,⁶ since in it the universal tradition received from the Apostles is safely preserved."⁷

The good Pope Eleutherius was in raptures of joy on receiving the message of the British king, and caused *Gloria in excelsis* to be chanted in commemoration of the happy event.⁸ He commissioned two holy Bishops, by name Fugatius and Damianus, to accompany SS. Elvanus and Medwinus back to Britain; and it is added by some writers, that he raised St. Elvanus himself to the Episcopal dignity. He is related, likewise, to have sent the necessary instructions for the ordering of the British Church, but to have declined complying with the king's request for a copy of the Roman laws, on the ground that they had no direct bearing upon Christian institutions.

When the holy legates arrived in Britain, the king, queen, and all their household, were immediately baptized. The name of the queen has not come down to us; but a sister of Lucius, called Emerita, is said to have attained the honours of a Saint.

SS. Fugatius and Damianus, having preached the Word of Life to the king and his family, next proceeded into the several parts of Britain. At the end of three years, they returned to Rome, reported the good success of their mission, and obtained from the holy Father a confirmation of their acts. They afterwards returned to Britain, and renewed their Apostolic travels,

⁶ Convenire.

⁷ S. Iren. cont. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 3.

⁸ See Ussher's Primord. Eccl. 10.

in the course of which they are said to have visited the Isle of Avallonia, the seat of the famous Monastery of Glastonbury, which had then become a covert for wild beasts.⁹ There they discovered, by Divine guidance, the ancient oratory dedicated to our Lord, in honour of His Blessed Mother, in which they continually celebrated the Divine praises. It is also related of the same holy men, that they founded at Avallonia two other chapels, one under the title of the Blessed Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, the other under that of St. Michael the Archangel. It is added, that they established a succession of twelve devout persons, in memory of the twelve companions of St. Joseph. Whether they died at Avallonia is doubtful; but a very authentic tradition records that they continued there nine years. Harpsfield places the scene of their deaths in South Wales, near the city of Llandaff, where a church was afterwards built under their patronage. Their names occur on May 24 in the English Martyrologies, where they are said to have died in the year 191. About the same time, king Lucius was called away from an earthly to a heavenly crown; having occupied, according to a very ancient belief, some of the latter years of his life in spreading the Christian faith among the nations of Germany and Switzerland.

It cannot be doubted, that the conversion of this good king, St. Lucius, was the beginning of a new era in the Church of Britain, and that very many of his subjects were moved by his example to embrace the Faith. It is equally certain, that the Lord raised up many devoted servants to work in this promising field of ministerial labour; true though it also is, that their memorial has utterly perished. Of the period between the death of king

⁹ Capgrave in Vitâ S. Josephi.

Lucius and the martyrdom of St. Alban, there is all but a total dearth of trustworthy information; but we gather from the testimony of foreign writers, as well as from that of our own sainted historians Gildas and Bede, that the Church of Britain was in a flourishing state during this interval, consisting of almost a century. And now the British Church is said to have been placed under the government of twenty-eight Bishops, and three Metropolitans, the chief see being founded in London. Bishop Stillingfleet, indeed, gives reasons which appear satisfactory, for believing that there was a succession of Bishops in the British Church from the first, though he considers that, under king Lucius, steps were taken for the increase and consolidation of the Episcopate. If there were Bishops in Britain when St. Lucius sent his embassy to Rome, it is all the more remarkable that he should have resorted to a foreign quarter for aid and counsel. And even if there were no Bishops in this country, he need not, as we have seen, have gone so far as Rome to supply the want. Let us but be content to follow the Church of all ages in ascribing a right of precedence to the See of the Apostles, and the conduct of king Lucius becomes perfectly intelligible, without the necessity of supposing any flaw in the succession of the ancient British Episcopate, or involving any disparagement of the claims of other European prelates.

CHAPTER III.

THE BRITISH CHURCH. — ST. ALBAN AND THE FRUITS OF
HIS MARTYRDOM.

A.D. 192—A.D. 359.

AFTER king Lucius, we lose sight of the stream of British Church history for nearly a century, when it reappears in the age of St. Alban and his companions, and then flows on more evenly and steadily till the time of the Saxon invasion. And, just as the reappearance of a stream at intervals is a proof that its course has been all the while continuous, though hidden, do passages in the history of the ancient British Church, such as the Martyrdom of St. Alban, betoken the presence of a real, though latent, faith, in the ages preceding. The heroic virtue of Alban and Amphibalus, Aaron and Julius, and of those “very many others, whose souls, in the midst of divers tortures and unprecedented mangling of the limbs, were removed in the very crisis of their agony to the joys of the supernal city,”¹ was no sudden outbreak of enthusiasm, no mere happy coincidence, or insulated phenomenon, but had its origin in causes of long standing and wide prevalence, and so sheds a lustre over the period which matured it, as well as over that in which it was displayed.

Our own island, moreover, appears to have enjoyed a profound rest, under the earlier of the persecutions by

¹ S. Bede, lib. i. c. 7.

which other Churches within the boundaries of the Roman Empire were visited and desolated. At length, in the reign of Diocletian and his colleague Maximian, it fell under the stroke of heathen rage and malice. The last and fiercest of the onslaughts, which during ten years deluged Christendom with blood, penetrated even into Britain; where, in the words of the holy Gildas, "God, who wills all men to be saved, and calls sinners as well as those that account themselves righteous, was pleased to magnify His mercy among us; and, of His own free goodness, to kindle in this island the brightest of luminaries, even His holy Martyrs; whose places of sepulture and of suffering, had not our citizens for the sins of our nation been robbed of them by the mournful incursion of barbarians, would inspire no little ardour of Divine love into the minds of all beholders; I speak of St. Alban of Verulam, Aaron and Julius, of the city of the Legions,² and the rest, of either sex, who, in divers places, maintained their ground in Christ's battle with consummate magnanimity."³

The Christian heroism of these blessed servants and soldiers of Christ, and especially of our glorious Protomartyr, might well form the subject of distinct biographies. It will be sufficient in this place to give a mere outline of its principal features.

St. Alban was converted to the Christian faith by Amphibalus, a clergyman, whom he had sheltered from his persecutors. Information having been given to the authorities as to the place where Amphibalus lay concealed, search was made for him in Alban's house; upon which his host, putting on his military cloak, submitted to be seized by the officers in his stead. When brought be-

² Caerleon on the Usk.

³ S. Gildas de Excid. Br. § 10.

fore the judge, who happened to be engaged in an idolatrous festival, St. Alban was first asked to join in the heathen worship, and, upon his refusal, was immediately tortured with scourges, and afterwards beheaded. Two miracles, according to St. Bede, were vouchsafed at the time of his death; the former of which led to the conversion of a person named Heraclius, who had been engaged to perform the office of his executioner; and another, who was found ready for the same unholy work, was instantaneously struck with blindness, his eyes falling to the ground at the same moment with the head of his victim. Many of the spectators, according to Harpsfield, were brought over to the faith on the spot by the sight of the holy Martyr's constancy, and of the miracles which accompanied his sufferings; and, following St. Amphibalus, St. Alban's guest and spiritual father, into Wales, received the Sacrament of Regeneration at his hands. Shortly afterwards, and during the same persecution, St. Amphibalus suffered martyrdom at Redbourne, not far from St. Alban's; and SS. Aaron and Julius, at Caerleon on the Usk. There were also, according to St. Gildas and St. Bede, many other cases of martyrdom at the same time. The survivors took shelter in "deserts and caves of the earth." For seven years the persecution raged with unabated fury; many churches were levelled with the ground, and others converted into heathen temples. Among those who, about this time, received the crown of martyrdom, or confessorship, were St. Stephanus, and St. Augulus, successive Bishops of London.

Peace was at length restored to the Church under Constantius, who, in conjunction with Galerius, assumed the imperial purple when Diocletian and Maximian abdicated. Constantius, to whom the administration of

Britain had been specially⁴ entrusted during the preceding reign, continued his charge under a new title, and with independent authority. The British Church speedily felt the effects of his clemency ; the Christians issued⁵ from their retreats ; the churches were rebuilt ; chantries erected in honour of the Martyrs ; festivals restored, with the solemn rites of worship ; and the voice of joy and gladness once more heard throughout the land. Constantius died at York, fifteen months after his succession to the empire, in the year 306.

The British Church was certainly represented at the Council of Arles in 314, and some consider, at that of Nicæa also, eleven years afterwards, though this appears very doubtful. The names of the British Bishops at Arles were Eborius, Restitutus, and Adelfius ; of whom Eborius and Restitutus filled the thrones respectively, of York and London. The see of Adelfius is more questionable ; by most it is considered to have been Colchester, or rather Maldon ; but Bishop Stillingfleet decides in favour of Caerleon, while other learned writers incline, and with much apparent reason, to Lincoln.

At the Council of Arles, it was determined that Easter should be kept on the same day in all parts of the Church. This canon was directed against such Orientals as followed the Quartodeciman rule.⁶ It was also resolved to degrade those of the clergy who had surrendered to heathens, during persecution, any of the sacred books belonging to churches, or of the vessels employed in the " offering " of the Holy Sacrifice. Other canons, chiefly

⁴ Gibbon, c. xiii.

⁵ S. Gildas de Excid. Brit. § 13 ; and S. Bede, H. E. lib. i. c. 8.

⁶ The question about keeping Easter which afterwards arose in Britain, and which shall be noticed in its place, appears to have been of slighter importance.

on points of discipline, were passed ; and the decrees in general were forwarded to St. Sylvester, the reigning Pope, to be circulated by him throughout the Church.⁷

At the disastrous Council of Ariminum, in 359, the British Bishops were betrayed with the rest into signing the heretical Confession. On this occasion we are told that the Arian Emperor Constantius offered to supply the assembled prelates with lodgings and entertainment at the public expense, but none of them could be found to accept the suspicious boon, except the three from Britain, who, being too poor to provide for themselves at their own charges, and too independent to lay themselves under an obligation to the other Bishops, fell in with the Emperor's proposal, and were accordingly maintained out of the imperial exchequer.

An ancient author commends the Bishops of Britain for refusing to be burthensome to their brother prelates ; but it is rather to be feared, observes Bishop Stillingfleet, " that the Emperor's kindness was a snare to their consciences." On the whole, there seems reason to apprehend that the British Church suffered, with others, from the Arian infection, though whether its declension into heresy were the cause, or the effect, of the unhappy step taken by its representatives at Ariminum, is more questionable. To the fact of this corruption, however, whether greater or less, and whensoever, or wheresoever, originating, the testimony of St. Bede is but too explicit.⁸

⁷ The words used in addressing the Pope, were as follows:—*Placuit etiam antequam a te, qui majores diœceses tenes, per te potissimum omnibus insinuari.*

⁸ *Ariana vesania, corrupto orbe toto, hanc etiam insulam extra orbem tam longe remotam veneno sui infecit erroris, et, hanc quasi viâ pestilentiaë trans oceanum patefactâ, non mora, omnis se lues hæreseos cujusque, insulæ, novi semper aliquid audire gaudenti, et nihil certi firmiter obtinenti, infudit.*

We have seen that the British Bishops were too poor to maintain themselves at Ariminum. The necessitous condition of their Church at this time, might have arisen from the combined effects of persecution and internal wars; the former had probably deprived the Church of her lands and stated revenues, while the latter had impoverished the country, and so tended to lessen the amount of the people's offerings. It is said that king Lucius made over to the Church the lands which had formerly belonged to the heathen temples, and bestowed upon it many gifts and privileges besides. If so, it is evident that great losses must have been sustained before the Council of Ariminum, where the Bishops of Britain were found unequal to a charge commonly borne by the different Churches of Christendom, in behalf of their representatives at General Councils. And for these, the combined operation of the persecution under Diocletian, and of the harassing wars with the Scots and Picts, will sufficiently account.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRITISH CHURCH.—VISITS OF ST. GERMANUS.

A.D. 359—A.D. 520.

IN the fifth century, the British Church received much damage from the inroads of the Pelagian heresy. Some have inferred from St. Bede's words, that Pelagius himself, after his condemnation at Rome, returned to Britain, of which he was a native, and poisoned the Church with his baneful doctrine. But the more immediate author of the mischief in our own island appears to have been not Pelagius, but Agricola, son of Severianus, a Bishop,¹ who had fallen into the heresy. This Agricola came over from Gaul about the year 425, and laboured, among others,² to corrupt the Church in this country. His attempt was, as it seems, but too successful in many quarters; at length, the Bishops of Britain resolved upon laying their grievances before their brethren in Gaul, and asking for help. The spiritual necessities of our island were likewise, at this time, an object of anxious interest to Pope St. Celestine, who had lately sent SS. Patrick and Palladius to preach the Gospel in Ireland, and in the northern parts of Britain. On hearing from Palladius, of the danger which threatened the southern provinces of the island from the progress of Pelagianism, the holy Pontiff was no less eager to counteract the spread of the

¹ S. Bede, lib. i. c. 17. ² Vide Stillingfleet, Orig. Brit. c. 4.

heretical leaven than he had before shewn himself to reclaim the pagan inhabitants of the island from idolatry and superstition. St. Celestine is accordingly believed, upon the authority of a contemporary historian, to have conferred with the Bishops of Gaul upon the state of the British Church, and to have sanctioned their choice of St. Germanus, Bishop of Auxerre, as a proper person to go to its relief.³ St. Germanus was unanimously selected for this important charge at a Council summoned in Gaul upon receipt of the letters from Britain, to which he was soon after sent in company with St. Lupus, Bishop of Troyes.⁴

The two holy prelates embarked in the winter season, and were soon overtaken by a violent storm, raised, says the religious historian, by the malice of evil spirits, to defeat the object upon which the blessed Missionaries were bent. All efforts to save the vessel became fruitless; and no resource was left but in prayer. It so happened, that, at the moment of greatest danger, St. Germanus was asleep. When all was now given up for lost, St. Lupus and the whole crew betook themselves to the older Bishop, and besought his intercessions; upon which St. Germanus proceeded to dip his hand in holy water,⁵ and sprinkled it upon the waves in the name of the Adorable Trinity; at the same time inviting his colleague and the whole ship's company to join him in prayer. In an instant all were on their knees, and a prayer for mercy rose to Heaven as the voice of a single man. The sky grew bright, and the

³ Agricola Pelagianus, Severiani Episcopi Pelagiani filius, Ecclesias Britanniae dogmatis sui insinuatione corrumpit. Sed ad actionem Palladii Diaconi Papa Celestinus Germanum Autissiodorensem Episcopum vice sua mittit, et disturbatis hæreticis, Britannos ad Catholicam fidem redigit. Prosperi Chronicon.

⁴ S. Bede, lib. i. c. 17.

⁵ Another account says *oil*. Constantius, § 46.

sea calm; favourable winds sprang up, and in a short time the ship was safe in the British port.

The Bishops were met, on landing, by a vast concourse of people, and the whole island was speedily filled with the rumour of their preaching, miracles, and sanctity. It was usual, in those days of the Church, under circumstances of emergency, (such, for instance, as the prevalence of idolatry or heresy,) to proclaim God's Truth, not within the walls of churches only, but in the fields and highways. Such a course is no otherwise irregular, than as it is adopted (as has commonly been the case in Protestant times and countries) without, or against, authority. In the instance to which we are now referring, the necessity was undoubtedly urgent; and, as the field or street preachers were here Bishops, acting, as it would seem, under the sanction of the Pope, no charge of insubordination could possibly be made good against them. As far, too, as success is a criterion of good preaching, that of SS. Germanus and Lupus is proved to have been of the highest order; for we are told that it tended everywhere to root the Catholics in their belief, and to shame the misguided out of their errors. The people, indeed, counted these wonderful strangers as Apostles; so glorious was their testimony, so gracious their deportment, and so commanding the authority with which they spoke. Their learning added weight, and their sanctity persuasiveness, to all they said; insomuch that the whole country seemed to be brought round with incredible rapidity to the doctrine of their discourses.

In the mean time, the heretical opponents of Divine Grace saw with evident vexation, that their day was gone by. At first, they withdrew from public observation, and mourned in secret the loss of their influence,

and the dropping off of their followers ; presently, however, growing desperate, they resolved upon inviting the Catholics to a public discussion. The place of meeting was to be, of all others, Verulam, where, no long time before, holy Alban had won the crown of Martyrdom, and which was afterwards called by his name. This sacred spot was now to become the scene of a new victory, in which the enemies of the Cross of Christ were not to be, as before, vanquished silently and by patience, but openly and publicly confounded as by a voice from Heaven. When the time of meeting had come, the heretics were seen advancing to the ground, attended by a long train of persons in costly habits ; for their success appears to have been chiefly among the rich. They were evidently bent upon making a grand display ; they seemed to feel that their popularity had declined from the moment that SS. Germanus and Lupus had set foot in this country ; and now they rallied all their forces and put forth their best appearance, with the view of shewing the world that they were not disheartened. They do not seem to have arrived at once, or even speedily, at this determination ; however, in the end, the more striking and adventurous policy was preferred. An immense crowd was collected at the place of meeting, including a great number of women and children, as well as men, all of whom, says St. Bede, looked upon themselves not merely as parties who had a deep interest in the issue of the conference (as in truth they had), but as in some sort umpires in the trial. There was, as may be supposed, a very marked difference between the spirit with which the two sides entered upon the contest ; and this difference was indicated by the very appearance which they severally presented to the eye. As widely, observes St. Bede, as Divine Faith is removed

from human presumption, and retiring piety from forward and clamorous ostentation, did the partizans of Pelagius differ from the disciples of Christ. In truth it must have been a very striking sight; and, in the present advancing state of Catholic art amongst us, it is not too much to hope that the "Conference of Verulam" may come to be selected as an appropriate subject for some great national picture. The reader will probably ere this have formed a mental comparison, or contrast, between the scene now attempted to be set before him, and one in which the prophet Elijah bore a conspicuous part. It was not, indeed, a question now, as then, between God and Baal; yet can it be so certainly pronounced that it was not one between CHRIST and Antichrist? For, that Pelagianism was at least one palpable form of the power which sets up self against God, will hardly be denied by any religious person. But to proceed. The Pelagians, by mutual agreement, were the first speakers; but it soon appeared that they had scarcely anything to say in defence of their tenets; still they spoke, and that at great length; till, at last, the audience were quite tired out by the multitude of their pompous but empty words. Scripture was of course their only standard of appeal; and what could be so hopeless as the attempt to prove from Scripture, that fallen man can originate good in himself? At length they stopped, and the Bishops rose, one after the other, to reply. St. Germanus was found, to the surprise of his opponents as well as of the audience, to have a vast fund of words at his command; he had studied eloquence and the civil law at Rome, and in his youth had actually pleaded causes in court. His Scripture proofs of the Catholic doctrine were absolutely overwhelming; he enforced them, too, as his knowledge and great

erudition enabled him, by arguments of a truly Divine wisdom, and illustrated them by the testimony of ecclesiastical authorities. The Catholic speakers were not afraid of making the most downright, and, to their opponents, inconvenient and oppressive statements;⁶ so great was the power of their cause, so ample the resources of evidence to which they could appeal in support of it. The heretics were thus effectually put down; the people testified their joy by loud acclamations, and were deterred by nothing but the venerable presence of the Bishops, and a regard to the sanctity of the place, and the solemnity of the occasion, from laying violent hands upon the defeated party. At the close of the conference, a certain tribune and his wife presented themselves before the Bishops, entreating their prayers in behalf of a little blind daughter, ten years of age. The Bishops, with the view of convicting their opponents upon their own acknowledgment, referred them to the Pelagians; but they, conscience-stricken and utterly dispirited, declared their inability to give any help, and referred them back to the Bishops. The latter then offered a short prayer, and St. Germanus made a solemn invocation of the Holy Trinity. At the same moment, he took from his side a little case of relics, which he was in the habit of wearing round his neck, and, in the presence of all, applied it to the eyes of the little girl, whose sight was immediately restored. We read in the Old Testament of a yet more amazing miracle performed by contact with the relics of a Saint; and who will deny, that the confutation of Pelagius was "cause" enough to warrant some special interposition of Divine power? However, it is safest, as well as most religious, to leave in God's hands the determination of the reasons

⁶ Assertiones molestissimas. S. Bede, lib. i. c. 17.

which call for His supernatural interferences. In the case before us, the miracle appears to have completely (if it may be said with reverence) answered its end ; it was regarded, for the time at least, as still more conclusive of the question between the Catholics and the heretics than the result of the previous debate. For, after that day, continues the sainted historian, all liking for the Pelagian tenets was thoroughly rooted out of every one's mind ; and the doctrine of the Bishops was universally followed with a holy eagerness.

Before quitting the neighbourhood of Verulam, the prelates went on a visit to the tomb of St. Alban. When they had reached the hallowed spot, St. Germanus made a short prayer, and then called upon some of the bystanders to open the tomb, in which he proceeded to deposit the precious relics of the Apostles and Martyrs which he carried about him ; considering it fit, according to the historian, that the bones of Saints from different parts of the world, whose parity of merit had raised them alike to Heaven, should rest in a common sanctuary. Having duly disposed of these inestimable treasures, St. Germanus gathered up a portion of dust, upon which the traces of St. Alban's blood were still visible, and carried it away to Auxerre, where he built a Church to the honour of the Saint, and deposited his relics near the altar.

The reader has already received a larger share of the history of St. Germanus than is quite consistent with the very general character of this introductory sketch ; and yet the mighty reformation effected in our island, under the guidance, and through the intercessions, of this great prelate, is an incident in British ecclesiastical story, too momentous to be lightly passed over, while it is difficult to convey any suitable idea of it, without

dwelling, at a disproportionate length, upon the personal history of the Saint who was the great agent in promoting it.

Before leaving Britain, St. Germanus was called to take part in a very different scene from that of the Verulam Conference. Some years before the arrival of Hengist and Horsa, in 449, the Saxons inhabiting the coast between Denmark and the Rhine were in the habit of making descents upon this island; and, while the two Bishops of Gaul were in the country, joined with the Picts, who occupied the northern parts of Britain, in attacking the more southern provinces. So great was the name which the holy Bishops had established among the Britons, that their protection was at once sought against the new enemy. Accordingly, they proceeded to the scene of action, where their presence inspired such confidence, that it seemed, says the historian, like the sudden appearance of some vast and unlooked-for reinforcement of troops. The Saints occupied themselves, during their stay in the camp, in endeavouring to convert those of the army who were still idolaters, and to introduce a reformation of life and manners among such as professed the Christian faith. It happened to be Lent; and a vast number of applications were made to the Bishops for admission to the Sacrament of Baptism at the approaching Easter. The soldiers, with the help of the Bishops, erected in the camp a temporary church, made of green boughs twisted together, in which the catechumens were received, and the festival celebrated with great devotion. The army proceeded to battle "with the dew of Baptism," says St. Bede, "fresh upon it;" strong in a hidden might, though, to all appearance, small in numbers and weak in resources. We have already seen how the early edu-

cation of St. Germanus favoured him in a former emergency ; now we find him turning the experience of other days to account in a different line. When young, he had filled, under the Emperor Honorius, the office of duke and commander-in-chief of his province. St. Germanus was still in the prime of his years, when circumstances forced him into this novel situation. Upon information that the combined armies of the Saxons and Picts were approaching, he at once resolved upon putting himself at the head of the British forces. Having led the troops into a narrow defile, he gave orders to them to repeat after him, in one loud and general shout, the word for which he was to give them the signal. When the Saxons drew near, with all the confidence of men secure of victory, the holy Bishops pronounced, three successive times, the word ALLELUIA, which was immediately taken up by the whole British army, and chanted in universal chorus. The sound was repeated and reverberated by the echo from the mountains, and with such violence, that the rocks, and even the very heavens themselves, seemed to tremble. The barbarians, supposing that so loud a shout must issue from an immense body of men, threw down their arms in a panic and ran away in all directions. Many were drowned in attempting to cross a rapid river which intercepted their retreat. The Britons remained quiet spectators of this strange scene ; masters of a spoil surrendered without a struggle, and gainers of a victory achieved without bloodshed. The Bishops especially rejoiced that their new converts had been enabled to save their country without even risk to the Christian tempers of meekness and charity ; while all seemed to feel that faith and prayer are the most serviceable of arms, and Saints and Angels the most powerful of

allies. The scene of this memorable event is said to have been a piece of ground, remarkable for the picturesque beauty of its situation, in the neighbourhood of Mold, in Flintshire, which is still called by the name of "Maes Garmon," or German's Field. The holy Bishops, having thus delivered Britain from a two-fold scourge, war and heresy, returned home, "the blessing of St. Alban," says the historian, "going along with them," and, after a prosperous voyage, (which, in those religious times, and especially in so early and rude a state of the art of navigation, was always regarded as an especial token of Divine protection,) were restored to the anxious wishes, and ardent prayers, of their respective flocks.

After some years, probably in 446 or 447, symptoms of the Pelagian infection began once more to manifest themselves in Britain, and the clergy unanimously determined upon again having recourse to the powerful aid of St. Germanus. Though now almost seventy years of age, the zealous Bishop lost no time in acceding to their prayer, and, choosing as his associate Severus, Archbishop of Treves, a prelate of great sanctity, and a disciple of his former colleague, St. Lupus, repaired, for the second time, to the shores of Britain. He had no sooner landed, than he received a visit from Elafius, a person of account in the island, bringing with him a son, in the flower of his age, who was labouring under a grievous bodily affliction. The nerves of one of his limbs were paralyzed, and the flesh withered, so that he could not put his foot to the ground. St. Germanus told him to sit down, and, applying his hand to the diseased limb, wrought an instantaneous cure. The miracle, as in the former instance, produced a great and immediate sensation, and disposed all hearers in

favour of the wondrous Bishop. St. Germanus and his companion had the comfort of finding that the great body of the British Church was still staunch in the Faith ; the error had made comparatively little progress, and, by dint of wholesome admonitions to the wavering, and strong measures adopted against the authors of the mischief, who were, by the unanimous voice of the Church, banished the island, the heresy was once more extirpated. As the best security against its revival, St. Germanus established schools in different places, especially two very famous in South Wales, which he entrusted to the care of SS. Iltutus and Dubricius. Among the disciples of the former, were St. Gildas, the historian, St. Malo, and St. Daniel, afterwards Bishop of Bangor. The celebrated school of Bencor, in Flintshire, which will be mentioned in the sequel, was also one of the fruits of St. Germanus' zeal. Indeed, this holy Bishop has been sometimes regarded as a kind of second Apostle of Britain.

Many persons will probably be curious to know something of the practice of the British Church in the days of St. Germanus. And it is important to shew the great antiquity of certain ecclesiastical customs, the origin of which is sometimes referred to a later period. One characteristic of the British Church in the fifth century, was the great honour paid to the sanctuaries and offices of religion. Every person who met a priest, made obeisance to him, and asked him for his blessing. Similar marks of respect were also paid to churches and the appurtenances of Divine worship, such as bells, service-books, and vestments. Of the devotion entertained towards the relics of the Saints, we have already had occasion to remark more than one striking instance. Again, the holy cross was an object of singular vene-

ration. The rite of Confirmation was accompanied by the use of the chrism. Penances were commonly performed; and, of all kinds of penitential service, pilgrimages to Rome were the most popular, as well as the most approved.

With these common and familiar features of the great ceremonial system of the Catholic Church were joined, in the British portion of it, others, more or less national. Thus we are told, that no one partook of a loaf of bread without reserving a part of it for the poor. Under the idea of "doing all to the glory of God," it was usual for persons to sit three together at their meals, in commemoration of the Blessed Trinity. Again, penances, and especially pilgrimages to Rome, were accompanied by the offering of tithes; two-thirds of which were given to the Church in which the penitent had been baptized, and the remainder to the Bishop of the diocese.

After St. Germanus had returned for the second time to France, the Britons continued to suffer from the incursions of their northern neighbours, the Scots and Picts; till, at length, in imminent danger of total subjection, they sent to invite the Saxons to their aid. Nothing can be more deplorable than the picture which the historian, St. Gildas, himself a Briton, has drawn of the moral condition of his countrymen at this time. During the intervals of rest from war, and plenty after famine, which occurred in the midst of their contest with the Scots and Picts, the most frightful sensuality seems to have grown up; and, along with it, such a total corruption of principle as threatened much more than any merely temporary demoralization of the national character. "What was worse than all," says the historian, after recording other vices, "was the hatred

of truth, as well as its maintainers, and the love of falsehood, as well as its forgers ; the preference of evil to good ; the homage paid to vice instead of virtue ; the longing after darkness instead of the Day ; the reception of Satan as an Angel of light. Kings were anointed,⁷ with no reference to God, but simply on account of their superior cruelty, and were soon afterwards put to death, without trial, by their anointers ; and others, more cruel still, elected in their place. If any one of them chanced to be of milder disposition than his fellows, or to have a greater regard for truth, he was immediately looked upon as the destroyer of his country, and became an object of universal and indiscriminating hatred and violence. Things pleasing and displeasing to God, were esteemed of equal value, or rather, the latter were somewhat the more highly prized of the two. In short, the warning formerly uttered by the prophet against the ancient people of God, might well have been extended to this country. ‘My sons, you have forsaken the law of God, and provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel. . . . The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint,’ &c.”⁸

Nor was this general corruption of manners confined to the laity. “The Lord’s very flock, with its shepherds, who ought to be an example to the people at large, was plunged in excesses, and rent asunder by mutual animosities.” From this miserable picture, which is pursued at some length by the historian, it is pleasant to turn to the Martyrologies, proving, as they do, that, even at this dreary time there were “lights shining in a dark place.” The century following upon the final de-

⁷ Hence appears the great antiquity of this practice in Britain.

⁸ Is. i. 3, 5 ; S. Gildas, de Excid. Brit. § 21.

parture of St. Germanus, produced the great names of SS. Daniel, David, Dubricius, Theliau, and Paternus, in Wales ; St. Kentigern in North Britain ; SS. Ursula and her companions, natives of Britain, and Martyrs in Armorica ; St. Sophias, Martyr, St. Keyna, Virgin, St. Gundleus, Hermit, his son, St. Cadoc, and master, St. Tathai, St. Dogmael, St. Gildas Albanus, and many others. Indeed, the fifth and sixth centuries may be esteemed the golden age of the Welch Church, which was at that period both the fruitful mother of Saints, and the vigorous defender of the Faith against heresy. In the earlier part of this century, the Pelagian infection began once more to break out ; upon which a synod was summoned to meet at Breff in Cardiganshire, under the presidency of St. David, and orthodox decrees were put forth, the record of which has, however, entirely perished, with all other documents of the time. This synod was convened about the year of our Lord 519.

One of the few circumstances of this period, interesting in an ecclesiastical point of view, the memory of which has survived the wreck of documents, and almost of traditions, consequent upon the Saxon invasion, is the question which arose upon the consecration of St. Kentigern. The proceedings upon this occasion were, in several points, uncanonical. First, the newly consecrated Bishop was under age, having been at the time but twenty-five. Secondly, he was consecrated by a single Bishop ; and thirdly, without consent of the Metropolitan. These deviations from the established practice of the Western Church have led some to conclude, that the ancient British Church derived its doctrine and discipline not from Rome, but from the East. Such an opinion, however, as it is certainly at variance with facts which have already come under our notice, so does

it gain no support from the case of St. Kentigern. For, surely, the irregularities in his consecration were as little consonant with the rule and practice of the East as of the West ; and must be set down, not to the adoption of any particular precedent, but rather to the departure from all precedent, rendered necessary by the very unsettled state of Britain, which presented many obstacles to communication between different parts of the national Church. Hence, as it would seem, the impossibility of obtaining, in sufficient time, either the consent of the Metropolitan, or the co-operation of other Bishops. It is said, that the case of St. Kentigern's consecration was afterwards brought before St. Gregory the Great, who dispensed, under the circumstances, with the canonical forms. About the same time, there seems to have crept into the British Church some peculiarity of practice in the mode of keeping Easter. It does not indeed appear that the Church in this country ever gave in to the faulty observance of the East so far as to keep the Paschal feast on a week-day, but only did not, like the rest of Western Christendom, make a point of avoiding the fourteenth day of the month, even when it fell on a Sunday. Yet at Arles, where three British Bishops were present, and again, eleven years afterwards, at Nicæa, where the British Church is also thought to have been represented, the Catholic, as opposed to the Quartodeciman and Judaizing rule, was formally sanctioned, and the British Church thus pledged to follow the Western practice ; a pledge which appears, by a letter of the Emperor Constantine, written the same year with the Council of Nicæa, to have been faithfully redeemed.⁹

⁹ Eusebius in *Vitâ Constantini*, iii. 19.

The whole question, as it relates to Britain is, as Mr. Alban Butler somewhere observes, no otherwise interesting than as a matter of historical fact. There are two reasons, however, which give it a claim to notice in the present sketch; the light which it seems, in common with the case of St. Kentigern just mentioned, to throw upon the state of the British Church at the period under review; and the prominence of the subject in the controversy afterwards maintained between St. Augustine of Canterbury and the British Bishops. The Scots and Britons were finally brought into agreement with the Catholic rule of Easter by the instrumentality of St. Wilfred in the year 664.¹⁰

¹⁰ Rev. A. Butler, *Lives of the Saints*. Oct. 12.

CHAPTER V.

THE BRITISH CHURCH. ITS DEGENERACY AND AFFLICTIONS.

A.D. 448—A.D. 586.

THE course of our narrative now requires us to turn to the barbarous nations which God raised up to punish the wickedness of the ancient Britons, and to become, in due time, the recipients of His converting grace.

The Saxons appear to have been originally Getæ, or Goths, who passed from Sweden into Germany under the conduct of Odin, or Woden, their military chief, afterwards honoured among them as their tutelar divinity. The Angles were probably a tribe of the Cimbrians; and the Jutes, like the Saxons, were derived, as their name imports, from the Getæ. In the second century of the Christian æra, these tribes were obscure and insignificant; but, in the earlier part of the fourth, they had grown into a populous and important nation. The arrival of some Franks on the shores of Batavia first moved them to try their fortunes on the sea; and they had landed several times on the coasts of Britain before the Britons, thus made aware of their bold and enterprising habits, were led to invite their assistance against the Scots and Picts. The result of this ill-considered measure is sufficiently notorious. Illustrating the old fable of the horse, who found a master where he sought and expected a friend, the miserable Britons too soon discovered that they had filled their country

with enemies under the mask of allies. After many years of ineffectual resistance, during which the invaders poured in upon the island in still increasing numbers, the natives were compelled to surrender, or to fly. The greater portion were enslaved to the conquerors; some migrated to the friendly shores of Brittany, where there had been a settlement of Britons since the fourth century; others withdrew into Cornwall; while the remainder, including the principal ecclesiastics, took shelter behind the mountains of Wales, which was evidently at that time the most religious quarter of the island, and thus from sympathy, not less than geographical situation and characteristics, the fittest of all places to afford an asylum to the exiled Church.

When the territory of Britain was finally ceded to the invaders, the see of London was filled by Theonus, and that of York by Thadioc. These prelates, with their flocks, determined upon flight; and accordingly, having gathered together all the sacred vessels they could rescue from the fury of the idolaters, together with many precious relics of Saints, departed, in the year 586, for Wales. There, upon their arrival, they reverently deposited the sacred relics in graves which they had caused to be dug for the purpose. Theonus was the last Archbishop of London; the primacy of the national Church having been afterwards transferred to Canterbury. The successor of Thadioc in the Archbishopric of York, was St. Paulinus, one of the companions of St. Augustine.

That, notwithstanding all the miserable corruption of the British clergy and people, the invaders found much more than the name and shadow of a Church against which to direct their rage, is evident from the Saints, dwellers in Britain, or at least natives of it, who adorned

the Church in the sixth century, in the middle of which we hear (besides the Saints more immediately connected with Wales) of SS. Winwaloe, Petroc, and Helier, the two former abbots, respectively, in Brittany and Cornwall, the last a Martyr in Jersey; and, even at the close of it, Brittany seems to have yielded one witness to the power of the Cross in St. Gudwall, or Gurwall, who, before his emigration, was Superior of a religious house of great repute in Devonshire. Moreover, it is plain from the account of St. Bede, that Britain was watered with Martyrs' blood even during the victorious progress of the Saxon arms.¹ "Priests," he says, "were *everywhere* massacred at the altars, and prelates with their flocks, all respect to honour being set at nought, were swept away by fire and sword, without any to give burial to their mangled corpses."²

St. Bede here seems to point to the Psalmist's words:—"Deus, venerunt gentes in hæreditatem Tuam; polluerunt templum sanctum Tuum . . . posuerunt morticina servorum Tuorum, escas volatilibus cœli, carnes sanctorum Tuorum bestiis terræ. Effuderunt sanguinem eorum, tanquam aquam in circuitu Jerusalem; et non erat qui sepeliret. Facti sumus opprobrium vicinis nostris, subsannatio et illusio his qui in circuitu nostro sunt."³

And yet, if ever there were a case in which the calamities of a nation wore the appearance of a most righteous judgement upon sin, and in which the chastisements of Almighty God, however terrible, were conspicuously tempered by provisions of mercy, the case of the Saxon conquest of Britain was such. That the visitation was

¹ Vide page 2.

² S. Bede, lib. i. c. 15.

³ Ps. lxxviii. (lxxix.) 1—4.

strictly retributive, is affirmed by both the sainted historians who have described it.⁴ Meanwhile, we, who come after, cannot but recognize the hand of Divine Goodness in an appointment, which destroyed one temple, only to raise up, in its place, another, far more beautiful and glorious. England, till after the Saxon invasion, was celebrated rather as the receptacle of new and strange doctrines,⁵ than as the “island of saints ;” at least, the holy names which have sunk deepest into the memories, and been most often upon the lips, of posterity, the virgin Kings, and the valiant Archbishops, England’s especial “glory,” were the fruit, not of the British, but of the English, Church. Would it not seem as if, in the counsels of Divine Providence, that entire repeopling of our island which followed upon the Saxon invasion, had some mysterious bearing upon the future destinies of the Church of this land? The materials of the former House were cast aside as vile and refuse, and a new quarry opened from which were to be fetched stones, rude in appearance, but meeter for the Master’s use. To say this, is not to derogate from the all-transforming virtue of Divine Grace, but merely to imply that its operations leave untouched the original distinctions of national as of individual character ; eliciting (if it may be said) only a more perfect harmony through the combination of various, though not discordant, elements of sweetness and power. Indeed, in the characteristic features of the Saxon nature, as they have been left on record by a most unsuspecting witness, the historian Tacitus, the Christian eye may perhaps de-

⁴ S. Gildas, § 24 ; S. Bede, lib. i. c. 14.

⁵ *Omnis se lues hæreseos cujusque, insulæ, novi semper aliquid audire gaudenti, et nihil certi firmiter obtinenti, infudit.* S. Bede, lib. i. c. 8.

fect not a few signs of that abundant promise which was afterwards realized through the mighty Agency which resides in the Christian Church. Deeply interesting and instructing is it to trace, in the dauntless bravery⁶ of those fierce warlike tribes, the seeds of the martyr-spirit ; of reverence for sacred things, in the dread of ceremonial pollution ;⁶ of aptitude for the deep impressions of awe and mystery, in the superstitious estimate of the female sex ;⁷ and, above all, of those lovely graces of virgin sanctity, and chastity in the marriage state, which bloomed nowhere so kindly as in English soil, in the honours paid to continence, and the estimate, for a heathen nation so remarkably strict, of the intent and obligations of the matrimonial bond.⁸ Nay, even in the very vices which prevailed among the German tribes, grounded as they evidently were, less in the desire of base sensual indulgence, than in the love of excitement,⁹ may be discovered the elements of a temper, (natural, rather than simply evil,) which the Catholic Church, with its opportunities of intense devotion, and, as it were, romantic enterprise, its magnificent and diversified apparatus of arresting wonders and soul-entrancing solemnities, is especially ordained by God to address, engage, and sanctify.

⁶ Scutum reliquisse, præcipuum flagitium, nec aut sacris adesse, aut consilium inire, inominoso fas. Tac. de Mor. Germ. vi.

⁷ Inesse quinetiam feminis sanctum aliquid et providum putant, &c. *ib.* viii.

⁸ Severa illic matrimonia ; soli barbarorum singulis uxoribus contenti sunt . . . ne se mulier extra virtutum cogitationes, extraque bellorum casus putet, ipsis incipientis matrimonii auspiciis admonetur, venire se laborum periculorumque sociam, &c. *ib.* xix.

⁹ Cibi simplices ; agrestia poma, recens fera, aut lac concretum ; sine apparatu, sine blandimentis, expellunt famem ; adversus sitim non eadem temperantia. *ib.* xxiv. But their besetting vice was, gaming. cxxiv.

Such, as portrayed by a heathen pen, were some distinctive marks of the character which Divine Grace was afterwards to mould into those various but alike noble and beautiful forms of saintliness, for which the English Church was once proverbial among the nations of Christendom. We are now to speak of the honoured instruments to whom the beginnings of this goodly work were entrusted.

CHAPTER VI.

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT, THE SPIRITUAL FATHER OF
ENGLAND.

NOTHING, humanly speaking, could have been more gloomy than the religious prospects of Britain, or, as we must now say, England, when the Saxons finally became masters of it. The ancient Britons, with whom alone of all the islanders the light of the Gospel now resided, manifested no disposition whatever to carry it among the Pagan Saxons. Their blameworthy supineness in this matter is distinctly objected to them by St. Bede;¹ and, for all that appears, with the best reason. It is true, indeed, as an historian has observed,² that so heavy a charge ought not to be brought against the Britons without certain allowances. Their relative position with respect to the Saxons, was such as must needs have rendered the attempt at conversion not less unacceptable to its objects than humiliating to their own national prejudices. But it is certain that no difficulties stood in the way of the undertaking, which a truly Apostolic zeal and charity would not have been aided to overcome. From whatever cause, however, whether as the result of internal divisions, or as the baneful fruit of luxury, or as a consequence of the interruption

¹ *Inter alia inenarrabilium scelerum facta, hoc addebant, ut nunquam genti Saxonum, sive Anglorum, secum Brittanniam incolenti, verbum fidei prædicando committerent.* Lib. i. c. 22.

² Rapin.

of intercourse with the Continent, a spirit of languor had crept over the British Church in general, during the century preceding the final establishment of the Saxon power, to which we are, perhaps, not wrong in attributing the apparent indifference with which its members seem to have regarded the spiritual desolation of their country.

But if the prospect was thus cheerless at home, still more improbable, surely, did it seem, that the arm of help would be extended from any foreign quarter. The great external source to which, in times past, our island had been indebted for religious knowledge, was the Roman Church; whether acting directly for herself, or mediately through her handmaid, the Church of Gaul. But, ever since the earlier part of the fifth century, when the empire relinquished its hold upon Britain, all regular communication between Rome and this country had ceased. Indeed, from that period, Britain, to all appearance, relapsed into the obscurity to which its remote situation and insular form naturally tended. Neither was it from Rome alone that our island, since its assertion of independence, was cut off. It became a little world in itself, the theatre of internal rivalries and struggles, but "seldom connected, either in peace or war, with the nations of the Continent; insomuch that in the copious history of Gregory of Tours we cannot find any traces of hostile or friendly intercourse" (even) "between France and England,"³ till the events which immediately preceded the mission of St. Augustine.

It has often been observed before, that Divine help is then ever readiest when human prospects are darkest;

³ Gibbon.

and surely the present case is to the point of this most true and consoling sentiment. What could have been more contrary to expectation than the means by which the intercourse between England and Rome, thus long suspended, was eventually restored, and restored with all the happier effect, inasmuch as it was to be henceforth a strictly religious intercourse, unfettered by any political ties, and unclouded by the consciousness, or even the memory, of any hostile relations? Such, indeed, the connexion between Britain and the *Church* of Rome had ever been; but perhaps it was difficult for the Britons to forget, as it was assuredly undesirable for them to bear in mind, that the power which had interposed to give them true freedom, was locally identified with that which never came before them but as the enemy of their national independence. From this time forth, however, the bond between Rome and England was to become an exclusively Christian one. And, as if to facilitate so blessed an issue, the island itself had been replenished with new inhabitants, and those were now to be brought into intercourse with Rome of a directly and unambiguously spiritual kind, who had never associated, even with her very name, any ideas at variance with that sweet maternal character which, by the mercy of God, she was henceforth to assume towards them. But we must hasten to a detail of the strange circumstances under which this new connexion between England and the Church of Rome was cemented; and to this end it will be necessary to shift the scene of our narrative from our own island, in which it has hitherto been laid, to that illustrious City from which the frail memorials of earthly pomp and temporal dominion had now departed, to make way for the one only Dynasty which is without limit and without end;

the Empire of empires, the substance whereof all other dominions are but the shadows, though itself but the shadow of that better and lasting Kingdom into which it shall one day be absorbed.

We will first speak of St. Gregory, the author of St. Augustine's mission. He was born about the year 540 : his father, Gordianus, was a person of great wealth and senatorial rank, who, in the latter years of his life, withdrew from secular cares, and filled an important office in the Church, that of Regionary, or one of the seven Cardinal Deacons, who were appointed by the Pope to superintend the ecclesiastical districts of the city. His mother was Sylvia, a lady who found her chief pleasure in acts of devotion, and who, for the more undisturbed exercise of prayer and contemplation, built herself a little oratory near the Church of St. Paul. Their son Gregory, that is the Vigilant, (a name given him under an almost prophetic foresight of his future career,) was brought up to the law, in which study he made diligent progress, and by his general attainments, and the excellence of his disposition and conduct, recommended himself to the notice of the emperor Justin the younger, who appointed him prætor, or, as we might now say, Mayor, of Rome. As chief magistrate of the city, he was bound to maintain considerable state, both in his dress and in other appointments ; he wore the *trabea*, which was a rich robe of silk adorned with jewels, peculiar to his own office, and that of the consuls. Such splendid trappings, however lawful as accessories to popular consideration and respect, and in no wise to be declined by those whom God calls to posts of earthly dignity, are but little in keeping with the mind of Saints, who ever desire to shrink from public gaze instead of

seeming to court it. Nevertheless, these accompaniments of worldly greatness do not furnish, on this account, the less valuable opportunity of self-denial, and even retirement of spirit, little as we might be apt to suppose that they could ever be made serviceable to ends so uncongenial to their nature and intention. In Gregory they did not tend, at all events, to obstruct the progress of the spiritual life ; for we read that, even while in office, he was continually at his devotions in church, or in private, and that he would steal away from the busy scenes of the world, when his other duties admitted of it, or decline more brilliant society for the sake of conversing with devout and learned monks. When he had filled the office of prætor one year, he resolved upon quitting the world, and taking the monastic habit under Valentinus, the second Abbot of the Monastery of St. Andrew, which he had himself built after he came into possession of ample estates upon the death of his father. He entered this monastery at the age of 35, but was soon obliged to obtain a dispensation from all strict fasting on account of ill health. He was attacked by severe fainting fits, arising from weakness of stomach, and this malady seems to have clung to him during the rest of his life. The necessity of taking food at times when the rule of the Church forbade it, was a great trouble to him, more especially in the weeks devoted to the commemoration of our Lord's Adorable Passion. On Easter Eve, the strictest Fast in the whole year, his grief at being precluded from conforming to the general practice was so intense, that he determined upon consulting a monk of great prudence and sanctity, named Eleutherius, in company with whom he prayed for power to "keep the fast at least on that sacred day,"

and immediately felt himself so much strengthened, that he was able to observe the rule without any painful consequences.

The time which St. Gregory passed in St. Andrew's Monastery, he ever looked back upon as the happiest of his life. After his elevation to the Popedom, he was apt, in conversation with his friends, to draw comparisons between the cares of his official, and the peacefulness of his monastic, life. "My poor mind," he would say, "recurs from these buffeting and piercing anxieties, to old monastic days, when it was occupied with higher matters, and allowed the passing events of the time to glide away, as it were, below it. So intent was it in holy contemplation, that, though still in the body, it seemed to have already burst the bonds of flesh, and to look even upon death, which almost all esteem a penalty, as but the door of life and the crown of all its labours. Now, on the contrary, from the necessary avocations of the Pastoral charge, it is obliged to undergo not a little of the business of mere seculars ; and, after so sweet a vision of its rest, has again to be soiled with the dust of earthly engagements. Thus, I weigh what I bear, and I weigh what I have lost ; and what I bear seems the more grievous from reflecting upon what I have sacrificed. For I am now tossed by the waves of a mighty ocean ; and my mind, like a ship, is dashed to and fro by the violence of a furious storm ; and when I recollect my former life, turning, as it were, my eyes behind, I obtain a glimpse of the shore, and sigh. And, what is worst of all, while I am in the midst of these enormous beating billows, I am hardly able to get a sight of the harbour which I have quitted." ⁴

⁴ S. Greg. Præfatio in Dialogos.

It would be very unfair indeed to take a Saint's estimate of himself as the measure of his real proficiency or profitableness. "We may rather conclude," says St. Gregory's biographer, "that, notwithstanding these lowly thoughts of himself, his pastoral occupations had detracted nothing from the sum of his monastic perfection; but rather that, by his labours in the conversion of many, he was making yet greater advances in the perfect way than formerly, when he was in the calmness of a private retreat."⁵

However this may have been, certain it is that the heart of Gregory was never more open to the motions of brotherly love and compassion towards sinners, than at the period when he had the greatest leisure for holy contemplation, and the study of divine books. Indeed, there is no specific against the spirit of a morose and exclusive selfishness more effectual than the habit of communion with God in prayer, and the intent meditation on holy mysteries. It is much intercourse with the world at large, which tends to dry up the springs of brotherly affection. Religious solitude, on the contrary, ever unlocks them and sets them flowing; and the want of active opportunities for their exercise, and the absence of visible objects towards which to direct them, are readily and abundantly supplied from the resources of mental devotion; since what charity can be more availing, or more comprehensive, than that for which Monasteries give such ample scope—intercessory prayer?

The rules, however, of the house to which St. Gregory the Great attached himself were not so strict as to preclude its members from those opportunities of active kindness which are furnished, with whatever draw-

⁵ Vita S. Greg. per Paul. Diac.

backs, to persons whose lot is cast in large cities, and whose duties carry them out into the streets. It was when he was a brother of St. Andrew's, that he chanced one day to pass through the slave-market at Rome, where, among the wretched victims of human cupidity who met from various parts of the world in that still famous and central, though now fallen, metropolis, the good monk was struck by the appearance of three youths, remarkable for the beauty of their complexions, and especially for their fine auburn hair.

Turning to the person who had charge of them, he asked whence they came, and was answered, "From Britain, where the people in general are as beautiful as they." "And are these people Christians," continued the monk, "or still in Pagan darkness?" "They are not Christians," rejoined the merchant, who had heard something of Christianity both in England and at Rome, "they are still entangled in Pagan errors."⁶ "Alas!" replied the monk, with a deep sigh, "alas! that so much beauty should be the property of the prince of darkness, and these fair forms be the dwelling-places of souls which the Spirit of God has never visited!" Then, after a pause, he continued, "What is the name of their nation?" "They are called Angles," was the reply. Now Gregory was a man of a lively wit, and, though at this time in a sorrowful mood, yet perhaps some bright and happy thoughts had flashed across his mind during the progress of this conversation; moreover, intense feeling of any kind is not unaccustomed to throw itself off in a kind of playfulness, which strikes bystanders as unfeeling and out of place. From whatever cause, Gregory's imagination caught at

⁶ Paganis laqueis irretiti. Vita S. Greg. per Paul. Diac.

the merchant's answer, and he exclaimed ; "Angles, call ye them ? Angels, rather ; for Angel-like they are, and fit for Angels' company. But to what province of their country do they belong ?" "Deira," replied the merchant. "Ay, and from God's ire they shall be snatched," said the monk, again playing upon the answer, "and brought over to the grace of Christ. And the king of their country, how call ye him ?" "Ælla," was the reply ; upon which, Gregory, eager, perhaps, to bind himself to the purpose of the moment by giving it formal shape and irrevocable publicity, and still finding in the sound of the last word a kind of tuning note to his thoughts, exclaimed, "Meetly is your king called Ælla, for ALLELUIA must be chanted in his dominions."

CHAPTER VII.

ST. GREGORY THE GREAT.

GREGORY could not possibly be mistaken in looking upon this incident as a providential direction to him ; and he accordingly determined, from that day forward, to give neither “sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids,” till he had made his words good by preaching the Gospel, or causing it to be preached, in Pagan England. Full of this purpose, he repaired to the feet of Pope Benedict I., and implored that a mission to England might be forthwith set on foot.¹ When no one seemed ready to undertake it, Gregory himself volunteered to go, should the holy Father see fit to appoint him. No sooner was it rumoured throughout Rome, that Gregory had surrendered himself to the Pope for this foreign service, than multitudes, both of clergy and laity, came forward to implore that his valuable presence might be preserved to them. However, after a time, the entreaties of Gregory prevailed against the voice of the people ; the Pope reluctantly gave his consent, and dismissed the monk with a special prayer for the prosperity of his undertaking.

¹ This chronology is adopted from Paul the Deacon, who is followed by William of Malmesbury and Mr. Alban Butler. Cressy puts the meeting of St. Gregory with the English slaves after his return from Constantinople, and in the reign of Pelagius II. John the Deacon, the other ancient biographer of St. Gregory, omits the whole story. In illustration of it, see St. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. c. 7. Malmesbury de Reg. lib. l. c. 3. Gerald. Camb. in Hebr. exp. lib. l. c. 18. Ina, king of the West Saxons, made a law against this hateful commerce.

Gregory then set out with some brethren of the Monastery, but in the strictest possible privacy. The fact of his departure, however, by some means got abroad, and all Rome was speedily in commotion. The populace, with whom Gregory was an especial favourite, shared the consternation of his friends at his sudden disappearance, and, having met in an immense body, agreed to separate into three parties, so as to waylay the Pope on his progress to St. Peter's. When his Holiness appeared, the vehemence of the multitude exceeded all bounds. Forgetting every customary form of respect, the people rushed towards him in a body, and pressed him with words such as these :—" You have displeased St. Peter. You have ruined Rome. Why did you let Gregory go ?" The Pope, it seems, had been, from the first, exceedingly unwilling to grant Gregory's prayer ; and this unanimous expression of public opinion furnished him with a pretext for revoking his consent. Messengers were accordingly despatched to recal Gregory. The zealous little troop of missionaries had proceeded three days' journey on their way, and happened to be resting themselves in a field, Gregory, with a book in his hand, and his companions sitting or lying still around him. It is said that, while they were thus reposing, a locust had perched upon Gregory's book, and suggested to his active fancy the idea of some check to his mission.² Accordingly, calling to his companions, he proposed to them to start at once ; when, on a sudden, the messengers of the Pope came up, and Gregory was reluctantly compelled to retrace his steps, and, on his arrival at Rome, once more took up his abode in St. Andrew's Monastery.

² " Locusta, quasi loco sta."

This abrupt, and, for all that appeared, final, termination of his hopes must have been a grievous disappointment to him ; but he had the comfort of knowing that he had done his best, made no false step, and acted from first to last in deference to authority. And he had been long enough a monk to find more pleasure in sacrificing his own will at the command of a superior, than in pursuing fond schemes of his own even in lines along which God's blessing might have seemed likely to go with him. For he knew that nothing short of a voice from Heaven can dispense with the obligation of implicit obedience to the clear voice of authority in matters not plainly sinful. Behold Gregory, then, with wishes crossed and hopes frustrated ; from the leader in a glorious enterprise, become once more the pupil in a school of discipline ; recalled from the pursuit of daring aims, and the indulgence of transporting visions, to the exercises of penance and the even routine of monastic life.

Not long after his return, Gregory was consecrated one of the seven deacons, whose office it was to assist the Pope. The duties of this ministry he discharged, says one of his biographers, with almost angelical diligence and fidelity. He was next sent by Pope Pelagius II., the successor of Benedict, in the capacity of Nuncio, to Constantinople, where, for several years, he represented the Apostolic See at the court of the pious emperor Theodosius. During his stay at Constantinople, where he was compelled to live more in the world than suited his tastes and habits, he was very careful not to break in upon those self-denying courses through which alone he could be rendered proof against the dangers of his new position. He even redeemed time enough from his public avocations, to write, at the

suggestion of Leander, Bishop of Seville, who happened to be then at Constantinople, his "Morals," or Commentary on the Book of Job ; a work which St. Thomas Aquinas is said to have highly prized as a repository of the soundest principles of Christian ethics. During the same period, St. Gregory was involved in a distressing controversy with Eutychius, the patriarch of Constantinople, who broached some heretical views upon the resurrection of the just. St. Gregory calmly remonstrated with him, and, in the end, the good patriarch was led to retract this error, and, during a fit of illness, made a public avowal, in the emperor's presence, of his submission to the Church in the article of which he had doubted. The error was never afterwards revived. St. Gregory ever stood high in the estimation of the emperor and of the whole imperial family ; as a mark of which he was selected to stand godfather to the eldest son of Mauritius, the emperor's son-in-law and successor.

In the year 584, St. Gregory was recalled from Constantinople by Pope Pelagius II., and on his return to Rome again betook himself to his beloved retreat, the Monastery of St. Andrew, of which he was soon after chosen Abbot. At the beginning of the year 590, Rome was visited by a tremendous epidemic, which was the occasion of bringing out St. Gregory's character in a new light. Having assembled the people, he delivered to them a powerful and touching address, and ended by appointing a solemn procession through the streets of the city in seven companies, which were to move, each headed by a priest, from the different churches, chanting *Kyrie eleeison* as they walked, and to fall in with one another at St. Mary Major's. So furiously did the disease rage at this time, that no less than eighty of the persons

who assisted in this solemnity died in a single hour during the progress of the procession. St. Gregory, meanwhile, was indefatigable in his labours of charity, and continued to assemble and exhort the people as long as the plague lasted.

During all this time St. Gregory had a great trial hanging over him, which, had he allowed himself to dwell upon it, would have been a subject of most painful anxiety. The mention of this will also serve as the explanation of a circumstance which, looking to the known humility and backwardness of the Saint's disposition, may have already occasioned surprise to the reader : his seeming assumption, during the pestilence at Rome, of almost episcopal authority. The fact is, that, among the earliest victims of the disease was Pope Pelagius himself ; and the unanimous voice of the clergy, senate, and people, of Rome, had fixed upon Gregory as his successor. It was under no eagerness on Gregory's part to respond to this call, that he came forward as he did at the time of the plague, but merely because there was no other ecclesiastical person who was obviously called to take the lead in a season of great national distress. St. Gregory was thus enabled, *vacante sede*, to gratify, without impropriety, his zealous and charitable inclinations. And perhaps he was not sorry for the opportunity of escaping from a great private care, by making others' feelings his own, and occupying all his time in works of mercy and brotherly kindness. What, then, was this care ? In such measure as the reader has learned to sympathize with St. Gregory, he will probably have anticipated it. The Saint himself did not take the same view with persons around him of his own fitness to undertake the government of the Church. He shrank, in fact, from the prospect of the Pontifical

dignity, which all Rome was eager to thrust upon him. He saw no escape from the alternative, on the one side of displeasing those whom he most valued, and seeming cowardly and obstinate besides, and, on the other, of incurring a responsibility, at which he positively shuddered, and which, far from coming recommended to him by the outward circumstances of dignity which accompanied it, was, for that very reason, presented to his mind in a light all the more appalling. St. Gregory did not deceive himself, as so many are apt to do under similar circumstances, by dwelling upon the opportunities of usefulness which attend the possession of place and power, whether in Church or State. If ever there were the man who might have been reasonably determined by considerations of this nature, it was surely he, who had the conversion of England at heart, and who was certain to gain, upon his elevation to the Popedom, the power of carrying out this favourite project. Still Gregory chose, (no doubt under an excess of humility and self-mistrust,) to look upon himself as unfit for the highest station in the Church; and from this view of the question, neither the entreaties of his friends, nor the unanimous wishes of the people, nor any reasons of expediency, could tempt him to swerve. How deeply the Saint valued his monastic calm, and with what apprehension he regarded the prospect of being finally severed from it and thrust into a prominent and conspicuous sphere, may be gathered from many expressions which fell from him, after his elevation, in confidential letters to his friends. The following may suffice out of a great number which might be brought forward. To one who had written him a letter of congratulation on his advancement, he replies :

“I marvel that you have withdrawn your wonted

kindness (in thus congratulating me) when, under colour of the Episcopate, I am in reality brought back into the world ; for I am now the slave of earthly cares as I never remember to have been, when a laic. The deep joys of my repose I have lost, and my inward fall is proportioned to my exterior elevation. Reason, then, have I to deplore that I am thrust so far from the face of my Maker. For I was trying to live daily out of the world, and out of the body ; to drive far from the eyes of my mind all corporeal phantasies, and with other than the organs of bodily sense to behold the joys which are above. I panted for the face of God, not in words only, but from the very inmost marrow of my heart, and cried, ‘ My heart hath said to Thee Thy face, O Lord, will I seek.’ There was nothing in this world which I coveted, nothing which I feared ; I seemed, as it were, upon an eminence, and enjoying almost a fulfilment of the Lord’s promise by the mouth of the prophet, ‘ I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth.’ But I have been on a sudden cast down from this height, and am hurried away by the whirlwind of these temptations into the depths of terror and alarm. For, *though about myself I have no fears*, I am full of apprehension for those who are entrusted to my care.”³

The last words seem to furnish a clue to the real cause of St. Gregory’s misgivings—anxiety for others. At any rate, so bent was he upon using all legitimate means against the appointment, that he even despatched private letters to the Emperor to withhold his confirmation of the election, and to the Patriarch of Constantinople to second his entreaties towards this end. All, however, was to no purpose. The letters were intercepted

³ S. Greg. Ep. lib. i. 5.

by the Governor of Rome, and others sent in their stead of a directly opposite purport. St. Gregory was naturally displeased upon finding that his letters had been suppressed, and, seeing no other course open to him, determined upon flight. Being unable to pass the sentinels at the gates of the city, he prevailed upon some merchants to cover his escape, which he effected by concealing himself in a wicker basket. For three days he lay hid in the neighbourhood of Rome, during which time "prayer was made for him," with fasting, by all the Roman people. At length, having been miraculously discovered, he was brought back into the city, amid the enthusiastic shouts of the populace, and consecrated Pope on the 3rd of September, 590.

We must now return for a while to England, where, as at Rome, the course of events had been most wonderfully overruled, so as to favour the accomplishment of those purposes of mercy towards our country, which it is the object of these pages to commemorate.

CHAPTER VIII.

KING ETHELBERT AND QUEEN BERTHA.

Two persons, who fill an important place in the history of the conversion of England, are Ethelbert, king of Kent, and afterwards of all England south of the Humber, and his queen, Adilberga, or Bertha. Ethelbert was great-great-grandson of Hengist, who, after the conquest of Britain, established himself in the kingdom of Kent. He began to reign in 561, and had therefore been on the throne thirty-six years, when St. Augustine and his companions arrived in England. During the greater part of this time, he held a very subordinate rank among the kings of the Heptarchy, especially after his failure in an expedition against Ceaulin, the powerful king of Wessex, who finally repulsed him in a great battle at Wimbledon, about the year 569. Being an ambitious prince, and proud of his descent from Hengist, he was still bent on obtaining power over the other kings of the Heptarchy, and, with a view to this object, sought to strengthen himself by a foreign alliance. He accordingly made proposals of marriage to Bertha, daughter of Charibert, king of Paris, and his wife Ingoberga. Charibert was a prince of depraved character, but he died when Bertha was very young ; and that princess, under the care of her excellent mother, Ingoberga, and her uncle Chilperic, king of Soissons, made such progress in holy living, that she afterwards became a real blessing both to her husband, and to the

whole English nation. Great opposition was raised by Chilperic, Bertha's guardian, to her union with a heathen prince ; but such ill-assorted marriages have been sanctioned in various ages of the Church, and not in the very earliest alone, (in which they were of course quite common,) in the hope, no doubt, that they might be blessed to the true "sanctification" of the unbelieving, or heretical, party in the contract. In the case before us, the difficulty was got over upon a stipulation, that the French princess should be allowed the free exercise of her religion in England, and be accompanied by a priest and confessor, so as to enjoy constant opportunities, as well of attending the public services of the Church, as of receiving the benefit of absolution and spiritual direction. To these terms King Ethelbert readily acceded ; and in the year 570 his marriage with Bertha was concluded. The clergyman, chosen to accompany the queen to England, was Lethard or Luidhard, Bishop of Senlis, a prelate whose name was afterwards enrolled in the catalogue of English Saints.

Upon the death of Ceaulin, king of Wessex, the most powerful chief of his time, a way was opened for Ethelbert's succession to the first place among the kings of the Heptarchy, which was accordingly yielded to him about 596, the very year in which St. Augustine's mission was undertaken. And here it may be well, with the view of throwing light upon some former passages of this narrative, and of saving digressions in the sequel, to mention the names of the different kings who, at the end of the sixth century, governed the various provinces of the Heptarchy, together with the boundaries of their respective provinces.

1. Ethelbert, king of Kent, whose immediate dominions comprised that county alone, but who, upon the

death of Ceaulin, and the succession of his son Cealric, had obtained an indirect authority over all the other kingdoms, with the single exception of Northumberland.

2. Edilwalch, grandson of Ella, and his successor in the kingdom of the South Saxons, comprehending the counties of Sussex and Surrey.

3. Cealric, the immediate successor of the above-mentioned Ceaulin, king of the West Saxons, and a descendant of Cerdic the founder of that kingdom. He governed the counties of Hants, Berks, Wilts, Somerset, Dorset, Devon, and that part of Cornwall which had not been secured by the Britons.

4. Sebert, king of the East Saxons, whose territory comprised the district which afterwards formed the diocese of London.

5. Ethelfrid, great-grandson of Ida, founder of the kingdom of Northumbria, and the successor to his dominions, consisting of the territory north of the Humber, and south of Edinburgh. It was generally subdivided into Bernicia, which contained Northumberland and Scotland south of Edinburgh; and Deira, which comprised all Yorkshire, and part of Lancashire, Durham, Westmoreland, and Cumberland.

6. Redwald, king of East Anglia, including Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, the Isle of Ely, and part of Bedfordshire.

7. Wibba, son of Crida, king of Mercia, the largest province of the Heptarchy. It consisted of all the counties which have not been already specified, with the exception of those districts which were occupied by the Britons.

One of the first acts of Queen Bertha on her arrival at Canterbury, the seat of Ethelbert's government, was to

obtain leave for the celebration of Mass in the little church of St. Martin, to the east of the city, which had been built in the time of the Romans, and to this day bears marks of its extreme antiquity. Here, Luidhard, the queen's chaplain and confessor, as Capgrave relates in his Life, was in the practice of offering the holy Sacrifice of the Altar; and "thither," says St. Bede, "the queen repaired for her devotions." So pious and discreet a lady could not but bestow many thoughts upon the sad heathen condition both of her husband and his subjects, and would naturally desire to emulate the example of her holy aunts, Clotilda and Ingundis, who were severally the means of converting their husbands, Clovis king of Soissons, the founder of the French monarchy, and St. Hermenegild, prince of Spain; the one, from Paganism to Christianity, the other from Arianism to the Catholic faith. These precedents in her own family, and that, again, of queen Theodelinda, whose influence had been similarly blessed in Lombardy,¹ had no doubt worked upon the mind of good queen Bertha, who had accordingly the honour, some years after, of being commended by St. Gregory the Great, for the zeal she had long manifested in the cause of the Church.²

In such charitable intentions the queen was powerfully seconded by her confessor, St. Luidhard, whom Capgrave even calls, for his efforts towards the conversion of the English, the "harbinger" of St. Augustine. It seems not unlikely that Luidhard, soon after his arrival in this country, had made some unsuccessful attempts to stir up his brother prelates of France in behalf of the destitute English, since St. Gregory the Great, writing about this time to Theoderic and Theodebert, kings

¹ S. Greg. Ep. lib. xiv. 12.

² Ib. lib. xi. 29.

of the Franks, severely condemns the supineness of their Church in neglecting to provide for the religious wants of their neighbours, the Anglo-Saxons, whose "earnest longing for the grace of life, had," he continues, "reached his ears."³ This longing is no doubt to be traced to the influence of queen Bertha and her confessor; from one of whom the Pope had probably received his information upon the promising state of England.

It thus appears that the mission of St. Augustine, through the great mercy of Divine Providence, was brought to pass at the very crisis of all others, when matters in England were in the best train for his reception. When St. Gregory first projected the English mission, and had, as we have seen, actually entered upon it, England was torn asunder by internal war; now it was comparatively united under a single head. Then, Ethelbert was one of the most insignificant kings of the Heptarchy; and, if the chronology here followed be correct, was not even married to Bertha. Now, on the contrary, from one of the least, he had become the very chief of the Anglo-Saxon potentates, with authority over the other kings, and through them over the whole English nation. Alone, too, of all the kings of the Heptarchy, he was brought by marriage into immediate contact with the Church; and the delay in the execution of St. Gregory's purpose had allowed time, if not for his union with Bertha, at least for the ripening of her influence over him, and for the continued exercise and display of those endearing qualities of Christian meekness and love, which had not only engaged universal affection towards her own person, but had likewise conciliated both her husband and his subjects towards the

³ S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 58. vid. inf. p. 84, 5.

religion upon which her virtues shed so bright a lustre. Nor should it be forgotten, that a very unforeseen and unlikely course of events, had lately placed the supreme, or all but supreme, power over England, in the hands of a prince, not merely predisposed by absolutely singular circumstances towards the reception of the Christian faith, but the seat of whose government was within a few miles of the port at which the missionaries must land, and in whose more immediate dominions they would find themselves as soon as they set foot on English ground. Had some decidedly hostile territory intercepted their progress from the port of their landing to Ethelbert's kingdom, who can say what hindrances might not have presented themselves, or whether they would have been so much as suffered to land at all? Even the kindly offices of the queen sufficed but to procure them bare toleration. What, then, if they had encountered on their arrival nothing but the jealousy and suspicion with which barbarians and heathens would be apt to regard a body of adventurers suddenly making their appearance upon the coast, and demanding entrance into the interior of the country without ostensible reason, or even intelligible pretext? However, it is idle to speculate upon such contingencies, since we know that He who orders all things for the good of His elect, never permits real difficulties to stand in their way. Speculations of this kind are then only pious, when used to aid and strengthen the feelings of devout wonder and thankfulness, which find scope for their exercise in every page of the history of our Lord's *actual* dealings with His Church, and nowhere more fully than in the annals of the Church in England.

CHAPTER IX.

ST. AUGUSTINE ; HIS JOURNEY THROUGH FRANCE.

It was not till the sixth year of St. Gregory's Pontificate, that he was permitted to carry into effect his merciful dispositions towards the English nation. It may be inferred, indeed, from the words of one of his biographers,¹ that, two years earlier, he made his choice of the person to whom the conduct of the mission was to be entrusted. Indeed, from the first moment of his elevation to the Popedom, he seems to have kept his heart intently fixed on this great object of his hopes and prayers, which, however, he was restrained from attempting to compass till "all things were ready" for the orderly fulfilment of the work. In a letter to Syagrius, Bishop of Autun, he speaks of the English mission as having been in his thoughts long before it was accomplished.² And the following letter, written about a year before the expedition to England, gives proof of his constant interest in the welfare of our country. It is addressed to Candidus, a Presbyter, who was on his way to take charge of the ecclesiastical patrimony in Gaul.

GREGORY TO CANDIDUS.

"We desire your Affection, to whom has been entrusted, with the help of our Lord Jesus Christ, the control

¹ John the Deacon.

² S. Greg. Ep. lib. ix. 108.

of the patrimony in Gaul, to purchase with the silver pieces you have received, some clothes for the poor, or to apply them towards redeeming English boys of the age of seventeen or eighteen, with a view to their being placed in monasteries, and brought up to the service of God. In this way, the Gallic money, which is not current in our country, will be usefully laid out in the proper quarter. If, too, you can make anything of the revenues which are reported to have been withdrawn, do so; and you will meet our wishes, by employing these also upon the purchase of clothes for the poor, or, as we have already said, upon the redemption of boys, to be educated in the service of Almighty God. As those, however, whom you will find there will be Pagans, I wish them to be accompanied by a clergyman; for they might chance to fall ill on the road; in which case, should their disease seem likely to prove mortal, it will be his duty to baptize them. Your Affection will see that these our wishes are carried out, and that with all expedition.”³

The Saint's thoughts are still running upon the miserable lot of these poor English slaves, victims, both body and soul, of a cruel and hateful tyranny. Perhaps he contemplated bringing them up, under his own eye, in the schools of religion, with a view to their eventual return to their own country in the capacity of native missionaries. In any case, when they were lodged at Rome, their presence, and the testimony they would bear to the miserable plight of their countrymen, must have acted as a continual stimulant to the compassion and zeal of the holy Father. We have already seen, too, that, from some other quarter, (probably from queen

³ S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 7.

Bertha, or her confessor, Bishop Luidhard,) St. Gregory had become cognizant of earnest spiritual cravings which had been awakened in the hearts of a portion, at least, of the Anglo-Saxon nation.

In the selection of persons to undertake the conduct of so momentous an embassy, St. Gregory was naturally drawn towards St. Andrew's monastery, with which, though absent in body, he was never otherwise than intimately present in spirit. He accordingly made choice of certain brethren of the Society,⁴ whose names have been lost, with the exception of four ; Augustine, at that time Prior,⁵ Lawrence, Peter, and John. The missionaries received the Apostolical benediction, and "went on their way rejoicing." It was the summer of 596, when they left Rome.

The site of St. Andrew's monastery, a spot so full of interest to Englishmen, is at present occupied by the church and monastery of S. Gregorio. In front of it are three detached chapels, built by St. Gregory the

⁴ St. Bede calls them all "monachos timentes Dominum." (Lib. i. c. 23.)

⁵ He is called by St. Gregory *præpositus*. Ep. lib. ix. 108. The Prior in Benedictine monasteries was next under the Abbot. For an account of his duties, see the Life of St. Stephen Harding, p. 45. For the question of the rule by which St. Andrew's monastery was governed, whether the Benedictine or Equitian, and if the latter, whether essentially different from the Benedictine, or only a modification of it, the reader is referred to Baronius, Ann. (A.D. 581) on the one side, and Mabillon, (Act. Sanct. Bened. vol. i., and Vet. Analecta, p. 499, and Annales Ord. S. Bened. vol. i. lib. vi.) who follows Reynerus (Apostolatus Bened. in Anglia) on the other. The point is also examined in the Life of St. Gregory the Great, collected from his writings, and prefixed to the Benedictine edition of his works. A short account of the controversy, with farther references, will be found in a learned note of the Rev. Alban Butler, appended to his Life of St. Gregory the Great. (March 12.)

Great himself, and restored by Cardinal Baronius ; the first dedicated to God, under the patronage of St. Sylvia, St. Gregory's mother ; the second, under that of St. Andrew the Apostle ; and the third, of St. Barbara. The last of the three contains a statue of St. Gregory, and in it is preserved the table to which the Saint was daily in the practice of inviting, through his sacristan, twelve poor pilgrims. On the portico of the church is an inscription recording, that from that House "went forth the first Apostles of the Anglo-Saxons."⁶

His Holiness the present Pope, St. Gregory's namesake as well as successor, was an inmate of this House till he attained the dignity of Cardinal.

Of St. Augustine's earlier history absolutely nothing is known, but the fact, which in itself speaks volumes, of his intimate connexion with a Society which always occupied so chief a place in the affections and prayers of the great St. Gregory ; and of his selection by that holy Pontiff, after years of anxious thought, and watchful observation, as the worthiest person who could be found for the work and ministry of an Apostle.

The missionaries took ship at one of the Italian ports, and landed probably at Marseilles, whence they proceeded on to Aix in Provence. Here they fell in with persons who made disheartening reports of the country towards which they were bending their steps. "It lay," they said, "beyond a sea of difficult navigation ; the inhabitants, besides being idolaters, were savages of uncouth manners and barbarous speech ; a cruel death would certainly await them on their arrival, if suffered to land at all ; but in all likelihood they would never set foot in the country ; and even at last, supposing

⁶ Hand-book of Travellers in Central Italy, 1843. Wiseman's Lectures on the Church.

other hindrances overcome, what chance had they of getting such a people to listen to them ?”

In all this there need have been nothing new and strange to the missionaries ; but, in the first glow of their enthusiasm, they had forgotten, as is so often the case, to count all the cost. One obstacle, indeed, to the work had, to all appearance, been fairly overlooked—the difference of language ; no insurmountable obstacle, indeed, if we remember that God’s arm is not shortened since the days of the Apostles ; yet one which it was undoubtedly the part of Christian prudence to anticipate. For miraculous gifts are too precious to be wasted ; and besides, miracles are designed to supply, not the omissions of indolence, or the mistakes of imprudence, but the short-comings of man’s natural power, when taken at its best and exerted to its utmost. And again ; while the faith of the Saints ever disposes them to expect supernatural interference on the whole, their humility discourages them from looking out for it in their own instances ; so that none will be less apt to reckon upon the event of its bestowal than those for whose help it is most apt to be bestowed. When the Apostles of our Lord went forth, they provided, it is true, “neither purse nor scrip ;” but this was at His special bidding. How acceptable to Him was this work of His servant, St. Gregory, He abundantly testified by the displays of Divine power with which He accompanied it, and the fruits of sanctity with which He finally blessed it. Yet the Saint would by no means rely upon those direct interventions of help (which yet in the end were so bountifully accorded), so as wilfully to neglect any of the ordinary provisions against necessity, or requisites towards success. We shall see, accordingly, that the check which the enterprise seemed to

receive at its outset by the occurrence at Aix, had no other effect upon St. Gregory's calm and prepared mind than to put him upon adopting fresh precautions, and especially upon endeavouring to engage the good offices of the Gallican Court and Episcopate in behalf of the disheartened missionaries. Among other steps which he seems to have taken in consequence of the difficulties raised at Aix, was that of procuring French Presbyters to accompany the monks to England, and act as their interpreters with the natives. It may be remarked, in passing, how strikingly all this is illustrative of the difference between true Catholic zeal and even the more amiable, and, in their measure, venerable forms of fanaticism.

The proceedings of the missionaries in France are matter rather of conjecture than of history ; but it would appear by the evidence of St. Gregory's Letters, that from Aix they went to the celebrated monastery of Lerins, situated on one of the little islands off the coast which lies between Antibes and Frejus. From this place, Augustine (who, as Prior of St. Andrew's, held the chief rank among the missionaries, though without, as yet, any formal authority over his brethren) set sail for Italy to lay the distresses of his companions before St. Gregory with a view to the abandonment of so unpromising an enterprise.

It has, perhaps, been too hastily assumed by some of the biographers of St. Augustine, that he was a party to the misgivings of his companions. One would not, without clear proof, impute even weaknesses to those on whom the Church has set the seal of sanctity ; and, in the present case, the supposition that Augustine expressed his own feelings as well as represented those of his companions in supplicating for a recall, seems more or less gratuitous. The words of St. Bede do not

necessarily implicate the Saint himself in the doubts and apprehensions of his brethren. After speaking of the alarm excited in the body of missionaries generally, by the adverse reports, he continues : “ Without loss of time they send home Augustine (whom Gregory had destined for their Bishop, in the event of their favourable reception in England) to entreat his leave to give up an expedition so full of peril, labour, and uncertainty.”

If, as seems most probable, St. Augustine left his companions either at or within reach of the Monastery of Lerins, it may well be supposed that the delay caused by his absence was far more than made up by the opportunities which it gave them of perfecting their as yet immature faith in the midst of monastic quiet and devotion. In a Society of kindred spirit and rule to that in which their own holy resolutions had been formed and blessed, they must have felt like persons breathing their native air after illness. How many sobering, yet stirring recollections must have arisen to calm at once and freshen their spirits ! This is an especial boon of the Church, to create, not one, but ten thousand homes for her children. It is pleasant to think that one of those many “ abodes of peace ” which have sprung out of the monastic institute, was ready to open wide its gates to these, tempest-tost and homesick travellers, and that no less an one than the asylum which furnished the solace of St. Vincentius’ declining years.⁷

⁷ Fleury, on the other hand, conjectures, that the monks of Lerins were the “ maledici homines ” * who tried to set the holy missionaries against the expedition to England. As, however, he adds his reason for this conjecture, it may be allowed us without presumption to argue against it. He infers, then, from St. Gregory not commending Augus-

* St. Bede.

When Augustine reached the feet of his master, he did not fail to report, among other and less welcome intelligence, the kind and hospitable reception with which himself and his companions had met at the hands of the Gallican prelates and ecclesiastics, more especially Protasius, Bishop of Aix in Provence, Arigius, Bishop of Marseilles, and Stephen, Abbot of Lerins; and by the letter of which he was, on his return, the bearer, from St. Gregory to Stephen, it appears that he had himself been an eye-witness of the order which reigned in the Society of which Stephen had the direction. The letter is as follows :

GREGORY TO STEPHEN, ABBOT.

“ Augustine, servant of God, and the bearer of this, has rejoiced our heart by the report he brings of your Affection’s persevering and most commendable
tine to the care of Stephen, Abbot of Lerins, that he was dissatisfied with the reception previously given to his missionaries in that monastery. But surely St. Gregory’s is a letter, not of recommendation, but of acknowledgement. He had no need to ask favours which had already been forthcoming without reserve. There is a like absence of recommendation in the letter to Protasius, Bishop of Aix, by whom also the missionaries had been kindly received on St. Augustine’s first visit to France. It is hardly probable that since the monks of Lerins had already (as appears from St. Gregory’s letter to the Abbot Stephen) entertained St. Augustine and his companions, the latter would be left by their hosts during the absence of their leader (which must have extended to some weeks at the least) to fare as they could at the public inns; especially when we consider how mindful religious communities have ever been of the promise, “ Whoever shall give you to drink a cup of cold water in My name, because you belong to Christ he shall not lose his reward.”

[Since writing the above, I observe that Mabillon speaks positively of St. Augustine’s companions having remained at Lerins during his absence.]

vigilance ; and by telling us that the Presbyters, Deacons,⁸ and whole congregation live together as men of one mind. And, since the good regulation of the body depends upon the virtues of the Superior, our prayer is, that Almighty God may, of His great mercy, kindle in you the flame of good works, and guard all those who are committed to your care against every temptation of the Devil's malice ; granting them all love towards you, and such a conversation as is well-pleasing in His sight.

“ But since the Enemy of mankind desists not from laying snares for our ruin, yea, rather labours assiduously to seduce, in some weak part or other, those souls which are pledged to God, we exhort you, dearest brother, to exercise your watchful care without ceasing, and so to guard those committed to you by prayer and anxious forethought, that this roaming wolf may find no opportunity of tearing your flock in pieces. So, when you shall have restored in safety to God the charge which you have received from Him, may He, of His grace, bestow upon you the rewards of your labour, and multiply your aspirations after eternal life.

“ We have received the spoons and platters⁹ which you have forwarded, and we thank your Charity, for thus shewing your love of the poor, in transmitting necessities for their use.”¹

⁸ It thus appears, says the Benedictine editor of St. Gregory, that there were many Clergy in this as in other monasteries.

⁹ Circulos.

¹ S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 56. Stephen did not continue through life to justify St. Gregory's good opinion of him. Five years later, we find the Saint writing to Cono, Abbot of Lerins, of the sorrow which his predecessor's (Stephen's) imprudence and remissness had often caused him. (Ep. lib. xi. 12.) Hence some would take the letter to Stephen as a mere admonition, which its tenor by no means justi-

The concluding sentence of this letter, though irrelevant to the present purpose, is far from being the least interesting and characteristic portion of it.

St. Gregory wrote at the same time to Protasius, Bishop of Aix in Provence.

“The ardour of your affection to St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles, is not only guaranteed by the requirements of your office, but is also evident from the devotion which you actually manifest in the cause of the Church. This we know from the report of Augustine, servant of God, and the bearer of this letter ; and we are proportionately rejoiced at the tokens of your earnestness and zeal for the Truth. Though absent from us in body, you have shown that you are united with us in heart ; for you exhibit towards us that brotherly charity which is meet.”

To Arigius, Bishop of Marseilles, St. Gregory wrote nearly in the same terms.

The arguments by which the holy Pontiff sought to restore the confidence of the missionaries, and the measures which he proposed for securing order and unanimity among them, are contained in a letter forwarded to them by the hands of Augustine.²

“TO THE BRETHREN ON THEIR WAY TO ENGLAND.

“Gregory, servant of the servants of God, to his brethren, servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“Since it had been better not to enter upon good designs than to think of withdrawing from them when undertaken, meet is it, my dearest sons, that you

fies. The probability is, either that St. Gregory was ignorant of facts, or that Stephen afterwards fell off.

² S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 51.

set yourselves with all possible alacrity, to fulfil this good work, which, with the Lord's help, you have begun. Suffer not the difficulties of the journey, nor the reports of calumnious men, to shake you in your resolution ; but, with all eagerness and fervour, carry through what, at God's suggestion, you have undertaken, knowing that the greater your labours, the more abundant will be the glory of your everlasting reward. Augustine, your Prior, returns to you with our authority to govern you as your Abbot ; obey him in all things with lowliness. Be assured that whatever you do in conformity to his directions, will tell to the profit of your souls. May Almighty God shield you with His grace, and grant me to behold the fruit of your exertions in our everlasting country ! that so, though I am denied a part in your labours, I may be found the associate of your reward ; since, had I my wish, I would labour with you. May God take you, my dearest sons, into His keeping.

“ Dated this 23rd day of July, in the fourteenth year of the reign of the most religious Emperor, our lord Mauricius Tiberius Augustus, and the thirteenth from the consulship of the same our lord ; and of the Indiction, 14.”³

³ The Indiction (fors. ab *indictis* tributis et vectigalibus) was a cycle of fourteen years, said by some to have been instituted by Constantine the Great in 312. There were several of these cycles ; the Constantinopolitan, according to which the years of St. Gregory's Pontificate are reckoned, began on the 1st. of September. (S. Ambrosii Ep. ad Episcopos Æmiliæ class i. 23. Ed. Bened. De Noe et Arcâ, c. 17.) The date of the Indiction, according to the Benedictine Editors of St. Gregory, was not put to the acts of any Council before that of Chalcedon in 451, nor used by any Pope before St. Gregory the Great. It was first used in state papers of France (Mabillon, de re diplomatica) at the beginning of cent. 9.

It may, perhaps, be gathered from this letter, that want of discipline was, in some measure, the cause of the troubles which St. Gregory was called upon to heal. Augustine's companions were probably younger than himself. Trained, as they had been, perhaps from boyhood, in a monastery, their minds were peculiarly in danger of being thrown off their balance by disturbing rumours. It was one of St. Benedict's wise regulations, that his monks were not to retail in community the stories which might chance to reach them from without. At all events, so long as these brothers of St. Andrew's were living together under the same roof, their lawful superiors would make it a point of duty to guide and govern their judgment of practical subjects in general. But it is likely enough that, when on their travels, matters fell somewhat into disorder, and that St. Augustine was neither allowed, nor perhaps altogether disposed, to interfere with the course of thought and conversation around him. It is not impossible then, that, while at Rome, he may have asked for ampler powers and a more definite authority. Be this as it may, the entire confidence accorded and claimed for him in St. Gregory's letter to his companions, is a proof that his own equanimity had been fully restored either before, or during, his interview with his master.

And surely if words of man could avail to reinstate these fainting souls in their hope, such must have been the effect of that touching sentence in the holy Father's address, "Had I my wish, I would labour with you." St. Gregory the Great was now drawing towards his sixtieth year; he had reached the zenith of ecclesiastical power, which men miscall greatness; he had his legates in courts, and his officers in provinces; he had many under him, but none above him here on earth; he was

chief among Bishops and a Bishop over kings ; throughout the Christian world his wish was motive, and his word, authority ; yet here is St. Gregory the Great willing, nay, eager, had such been his Lord's appointment, to withdraw from privileges so august, and powers so commanding ; to exchange the diadem for the cowl, and the throne for the highway ; for the sympathy of intimates to receive the cold looks of strangers, and the repulses of men in power for the deference of vassals. And St. Gregory the Great, as his history shews, was no random speaker, or hollow professor.

St. Augustine, besides the letter to his companions, was the bearer of others commendatory of himself and his brethren to the kind offices of the prelates and sovereign princes of that part of Gaul through which their road lay. To the Bishops of Tours and Marseilles, the Pope addressed a letter which bears the same date with that to the English missionaries ;— July 23, A. D. 596.

“ GREGORY TO PELAGIUS BISHOP OF TOURS, AND SERENUS BISHOP OF MARSEILLES, BOTH IN FRANCE. A DUPLICATE.⁴

“ Though with priests full of the charity which God loves, religious men need no recommendation, yet as the present seems a suitable time for writing, we have caused this our communication to be addressed to your Brotherhood, to intimate to you that, under the Divine guidance, and for the benefit of souls, we have appointed the bearer of this, Augustine, servant of God, (of whose affection we are well assured,) in company with others of God's servants, to a distant mission.⁵ Your Holiness

⁴ A paribus.

⁵ Illuc. The name of the country to which the missionaries were bound, is apparently avoided as a precaution.

must help him, out of your priestly kindness, and lose no time in affording him such solace as is in your power. And, in order that you may be the rather disposed to give him the benefit of your friendly interest, he has instructions from us to acquaint you precisely⁶ with the occasion of his journey ; for we are satisfied that, when it shall become known to you, you will adapt yourself, with all devotion towards God, to the urgent circumstances which place him in need of your consolation.”⁷

St. Gregory writes nearly in the same terms to Virgilius, Archbishop of Arles, and Metropolitan ; and to Desiderius and Syagrius, Bishops, respectively, of Vienne and Autun.

Besides these commendatory letters to the Church, the Pope sought to obtain a safe-conduct for his missionaries by means of addresses to the chief civil authorities. Their course lay through the territories of Theoderic and his brother Theodebert, kings of Burgundy and Austrasia,⁸ the former of whom had his seat of government at Chalons, the latter at Rheims ; and Augustine was furnished, on his return, with credentials to both of these young princes.

“ GREGORY TO THEODERIC AND THEODEBERT, BROTHERS,
KINGS OF THE FRANKS. A DUPLICATE.

“ Since Almighty God has adorned your kingdom with orthodoxy of faith, and caused it to be conspicuous

⁶ Subtiliter.

⁷ S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 52.

⁸ Theoderic was the second, and Theodebert the elder, son of Chilperic, to whose dominions they succeeded on the death of their father in 569, the year in which they are thus addressed by St. Gregory. It would seem from history that the elder of the two was not at this time more than ten years of age. Their dominions were admi-

among other nations, for the purity in which it holds the Christian religion, we have conceived strong grounds of hope that you will wish your subjects to be entirely brought over to the Faith which is the bond of your relation towards them as their lords and governors. Now it has reached us, that the English nation has been led by the mercy of God to an ardent longing for conversion to the faith of Christ, but that the priests of the neighbouring country are negligent, and omit to supply fuel to the flame of their holy desires, by means of such exhortations as they might employ. For this reason it is, that we have taken measures for sending Augustine, servant of God, and the bearer of this letter (of whose zeal and affection we are well assured), in company with others of God's servants to these parts. And we have also given them instructions to take with them some presbyters of the neighbouring country, with whose assistance they may be able to sound the dispositions of the new people, and help their good intentions, so far as God gives them the power. And, in order that they may prove themselves meet and able for this ministry, we entreat your Excellency, whom we greet with all fatherly affection, to extend to those who bear our commission, the benefit of such countenance as you shall deem to befit them. And, as it is a case in which souls are at stake, may your influence protect and aid them, that so Almighty God, who knows you to give this comfort with a devout heart and a pure zeal in His cause, may take all your proceedings under His care, and lead you safe through earthly power to His Kingdom in heaven."⁹

nistered during their minority by Brunehault (Brunichildis) their grandmother, of whom below.

⁹ S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 58.

Augustine was the bearer of another letter, addressed to Brunehault, the queen-regent,¹ which ran as follows.

“ GREGORY TO BRUNEAULT, QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

“ Your Christian Excellency is so well known to us, that we can by no means doubt of your goodness ; but rather hold it as quite unquestionable, that, in the cause of the Faith, you will devotedly and zealously cooperate with us, and supply, in the largest abundance, the consolations which we have reason to expect from a religion so sincere. In this confidence, we greet you out of our fatherly affection, and make known to you, that the English nation, according to reports which have reached us, has a desire, under God’s inspiration, to become Christian, but that the priests of the neighbouring country are wanting in pastoral solicitude towards them. Accordingly, that these souls may be rescued from everlasting perdition, we have undertaken to commission to this charge, Augustine, servant of God, and the bearer of this (of whose zeal and affection we are well assured), in company with others of God’s servants ; for we are desirous of learning through them, the disposition of the people, and, with your assistance, of taking means, as far as may be, for their conversion. We have also instructed them that it will be their duty to take with them some presbyters from the neighbouring country. Will your Excellency, then, who is apt to be forward

¹ Brunehault was daughter of Athanagild, king of the Visigoths, and in 566 became the wife of Sigebert, king of Metz. The fruit of this marriage was Childebart, father of the aforementioned Theodebert and Theoderic, for whom Brunehault acted as regent at the time of St. Augustine’s mission. History imputes many foul crimes to this princess, which it is hardly possible to reconcile with St. Gregory’s language towards her.

in all good works, condescend, both in compliance with our request and out of regard to God's fear, to consider him as commended to you in all things ; to bestow on him zealously the favour of your protection, and the benefit of your patronage in his labours ? And, in order to render your recompense complete, will you furnish him with a safe-conduct on his way to the above-mentioned English people ? So may our God, who, in this world has adorned you with works well pleasing to Him, grant you both here, and in the place of everlasting rest, to rejoice with his Saints." ²

St. Gregory's letters furnish us with a clue to the line of road which the missionaries must have taken on their way through France. Augustine, now fortified in his purpose by his visit to Rome, rejoined his brethren at Lerins, where he delivered his letter to the Abbot Stephen. The missionaries may be supposed to have then proceeded to Aix, and thence to Arles, at both of which cities, they had an introduction to the respective prelates, Pelagius and Virgilius. From Arles, their road lay by Vienne, the Bishop of which was Desiderius (to whom they were also recommended), to Chalons, where queen Brunehault was residing with her son Theoderic king of Burgundy. The queen gave the holy monks a very handsome reception ; for which St. Gregory expressed his acknowledgments in a letter of four years later date.³ They next went to Autun, the see of Syagrius, to whom they carried letters ; and then perhaps made a diversion to Rheims, the court of Theodebert, king of Austrasia. They afterwards proceeded by Sens (where they found the Bishop, Palladius, with whom St. Gregory was in habits of corres-

² S. Greg. Ep. lib. vi. 59.

³ S. Greg. Ep. lib. ix. 11.

pondence) to Tours, where they had a special recommendation to Pelagius. At Tours, they would not fail to visit the tomb and relics of the great St. Martin. Thence they descended towards the coast, through Anjou, which was the scene, according to St. Augustine's biographer, of several remarkable occurrences. At the town of Cé near the bridge of that name, the appearance of the missionaries caused a disturbance, which ended in their being expelled from the town, and obliged to pass the night in the open air. In this fray, the women of the place took a principal part; they ran about in a wild disorderly manner, filled the air with frantic shrieks, and even proceeded to acts of violence against the meek and unoffending strangers. One of them, more shameless than the rest, is said to have approached Augustine and menaced his life. The Saint instinctively seized a javelin to protect himself, as if against some wild beast; the javelin sprang from his hand as an arrow from a bow, and fixed itself in the ground three furlongs off. The Saint followed it, and, on plucking it from the earth, a pure and abundant spring of water gushed forth, to the joy of the missionaries, and the confusion of their enemies. It is also added that, during the night, the ground on which the holy monks reposed, was illuminated by a supernatural light; as though God would "shew some token upon them for good, that they who hated them, might see it and be ashamed." At the sight of these wonders, the infuriated populace "changed their minds, and said that they were divinities;" at least, they set themselves, when St. Augustine was gone, to build a church in his honour, "which," says Mabillon, "is still to be seen with the spring, and a priory dedicated to St. Outin (or Augustine)."

It is added, that the first woman who attempted to enter this church, was smitten dead at the door ; and that none of the females of Aix could afterwards be induced to pass the fatal threshold ; counting the calamity, as well they might, for a judgement upon their impious usage of a Saint beloved of God. Before St. Augustine left Anjou, he is said to have received a visit of consolation from the Bishop of the diocese.

In Anjou, the missionaries would be no great way from the British Channel ; to whose billows they would commit themselves in security, under the happy consciousness of possessing a share in their Lord's benediction ; "*Omnis qui reliquerit domum, vel fratres, aut sorores, aut patrem, aut matrem, aut uxorem, aut filios, aut agros, propter Nomen Meum, centuplum accipiet, et vitam æternam possidebit.*"⁴

⁴ S. Matt. xix. 29.

CHAPTER X.

ST. AUGUSTINE IN THANET.

FEW parts of our country have been more changed by the progress of time than the little Isle of Thanet. It was anciently much larger than now: Gocelin, St. Augustine's biographer, calls it, possibly from want of accurate information, "very large;"¹ Venerable Bede, "considerable;"² and the latter assigns it an extent materially beyond its present acreage.³ Its insular character, too, though still remaining, is much less apparent than in very old times; for the river which now divides it from the coast of Kent, is so inconsiderable as rather to deserve the name of a stream, or even a brook. In the time of St. Bede, this river, though even then degenerated from its original size and bulk, and called, in token of its comparative scantiness, the "Wantsum," or "Deficient Water," was still upwards of a quarter of a mile in breadth. It was, in fact, rather an inlet of the sea than a river, although two rivers, the Stour and the Nethergong, contributed to the main body of water. But the channel derived its chief importance from the sea, which, at high tide, formed itself a passage between the northern and south-western extremities of the island; the Genlade, near Reculver,

¹ Prægrandis.

² Non modica.

³ Sexcentarum familiarum, which is computed at 60,000 acres; whereas, Hasted, at the close of the last century, reckons its extent at 26,500 acres, which agrees with present calculations. Possibly the word "sexcenti" is put, according to later usage, for an indefinitely large number.

on the one side, and the port of Richborough (the Rutupium of the Romans) on the other. The whole of this wide channel went, anciently, by the name of the Portus Rutupinus. The usual course for vessels on their way from France to London, was to enter at the port of Richborough, and, proceeding round the Isle of Thanet, to come out at the Genlade, where they would find themselves in the estuary of the Thames. Such, however, as were bound for Kent, deposited their cargo at the little town of Ebbesfleet, which lay on the north-eastern side of Richborough harbour. Ebbesfleet may be seen in maps of the Isle of Thanet; lying between four and five miles on the present road from Ramsgate to Sandwich. It consists at this time but of one or two inconsiderable houses, far enough from the sea to be almost out of sight of it. About two miles from Ramsgate, at Cliffs-end, the appearance of the coast, as is well known, suddenly changes, the precipitous white cliffs terminating in a perfectly level shore. Ebbesfleet, where St. Augustine is believed to have landed, is somewhat farther on, and is now, as we have already said, more than two miles within the island, the sea having, in later times, retreated from its ancient boundary on this side of Thanet, as much as it is reported to have gained on it in the neighbourhood of Reculver, where very old people can remember having played at cricket on ground which has now quite disappeared. Hasted, the historian of Kent, considers that "on the northern and eastern side of the island the sea must have washed away many hundred acres (not to say thousands) if it has encroached for the seven hundred years before in proportion to its advances in the last one hundred and fifty. On the south and west parts, however, there

are some hundreds of acres now dry land which were anciently all under water, and a navigable stream, where the sea ebbed and flowed.”⁴ Tracts of low marshy land occupy the place of the ancient harbour of Richborough ; and the River Stour, which was formerly lost in the ampler tide of the great Rutupian channel, is now seen languidly working its way by a tortuous course, through the marshes and sandbanks, till it finds an outlet in the sea a little to the east of Sandwich.

It was, probably, in the spring of the year 597, that Augustine and his companions (increased by the addition of the interpreters whom they had taken up in France, to the number of forty persons) first set foot on English ground. The important spot seems to have been known and venerated by our Catholic ancestors ; the stone which first received the impression of the feet of those who came to preach the Gospel of peace in our beloved country, having, we are told, been religiously preserved as a precious memento in the Chapel of St. Augustine’s Monastery at Canterbury.

The missionaries had no sooner landed, than one or two of their body proceeded, (in company with the French interpreters, whom, by St. Gregory’s desire, they had brought over with them,) to Canterbury, where they duly acquainted king Ethelbert with the fact and object of their arrival. Great was the joy with which the good Bertha beheld the dawn of a day which she had long desired to see, and for the gift of which she had breathed many a secret prayer in the little church of St. Martin. He who had been her associate in this delightful hope, the hope of seeing a way opened for the conversion of England, the good Bishop, St. Luidhard,

⁴ History of Kent, vol. iv. pp. 291, 292, 294.

had gone to his glory a few months earlier;⁵ not ignorant, probably, before he was taken from the world below, of the approach of the blessed missionaries to England, but still uncertain of the issue of their perilous and protracted journey. Was he not withdrawn in mercy at that critical juncture, to offer, for the objects of his care, and the partners of his zeal, a more confident, more intelligent, more unembarrassed, more prevailing prayer than the hindrances of this dark and sinful state allow; and to take under the shelter of his patronage, as a glorified Saint, those on whom before he could but bestow the far feeble aid of a fellow-sinner's sympathy? Such thoughts, at least, however alien to the spirit of modern times, were undoubtedly those in which the unsophisticated mind of queen Bertha found its best solace under the removal from her sight of so trusty a counsellor and friend; a loss which must have pressed heavily upon her at a time when there were none around her "like-minded," and such as would naturally "care for the state" of the poor Anglo-Saxons. At that dreary moment St. Augustine must have seemed to her like an emissary from St. Luidhard, charged with a message of consolation and encouragement.

King Ethelbert gave the deputies a favourable hearing, and instructed them to prepare their master for seeing him at the coast on a future day. In the meantime, he sent orders that the mysterious strangers should be hospitably treated. It was impossible but that Ethelbert, during the years of his affectionate intercourse with Bertha, must have learned to regard the Christian religion with some better feelings than

⁵ Vid. *Gallia Christiana*, vol. x. p. 1382, where he is said to have died in 596, the year before St. Augustine's arrival.

those of mere indifference ; though up to this time, and for some months afterwards, he continued to join in the Pagan ceremonies at his private chapel, the little church of St. Pancras, while his queen was attending mass at St. Martin's ; unless, indeed, as seems more than probable, the public solemnities of religion had been latterly interrupted by the death of St. Luidhard, and the queen compelled to offer her prayers in the secrecy of her own private apartment.

After some days, king Ethelbert proceeded to the Isle of Thanet, and met St. Augustine, according to tradition, at Richborough. He took his seat in the open air, and summoned the Saint into his presence, not wishing, says the historian, to trust himself under the same roof with strangers whom he suspected of magical arts. Even the darkest superstition has its redeeming features ; its pious misgivings, and its holier auguries ; however, as in this instance, preposterously misplaced. For “ they came (proceeds St. Bede, with his usual sweet and touching simplicity) “ not furnished with diabolical arts, but endowed with gifts from on high.”⁶

No sooner were the king's arrival and summons made known, than the missionaries gathered together their little hoard of Catholic emblems, which were confined to such symbols only as befitted the character, and corresponded to the needs, of a wayfaring Church. These were, a tall silver cross,⁷ the accompaniment, from very

⁶ Lib. i. c. 25.

⁷ The crucifix was probably not introduced till more than a century later ; it was sanctioned at the Quinisexan Council in 692. In the earliest ages all representations of our Lord on the cross were discountenanced out of regard to the prejudices of heathens, to whom

ancient times, of all solemn religious processions, and a large board, or canvass, on which was painted, in the rude style of the time, a figure of our Blessed Redeemer. Having provided themselves with these sacred badges, so significant of aggression upon the world and triumph over it, they formed into a procession, (which, considering their numbers, must have presented no mean appearance,) and so advanced towards the place of reception. Those who have visited Richborough and the parts adjacent, will be aware how peculiarly favourable to what may be called the *effect* of such a scene are the characteristics of the surrounding country ; destitute as it is, almost to barrenness, of trees, and, from its natural situation, a spot which must always have been unpropitious to their growth. The course of centuries, with all its transforming influences, cannot affect the properties of the ocean, nor alter the points of the compass ; sea air and east winds must ever work their withering effects upon verdure and foliage ; however, in more inland districts, wastes may have taken the place of forests, and pastures now smile where swamps formerly looked chill. Surely Richborough could never have been otherwise than a cold dreary spot. As we stand, then, beside the shattered walls of its old castle, that unpicturesque and legendless ruin, and tread upon its vast cruciform pavement (in which the Catholic imagination would fain trace a memorial of St. Augustine's landing, or interview with Ethelbert, till checked in its flight by some stern and truthful antiquary, assuring us that what looks like the spacious area of a church, was,

“ Christ crucified ” was a “ stumbling-block.” The blessings of redemption were accordingly symbolized under the image of a lamb bearing a cross. Pictures of the Crucifixion then came into use, and ultimately figures carved in wood, &c.

in fact, but the upper surface of the vaulting of a Roman granary) the eye may help the mind to form no inaccurate picture of the memorable scene before us. Behold, then, the prince, on whose decision, humanly speaking, the religious destinies of England seem to hang, seated, with his court around him, on such sorry rustic throne as the time and place supplied, to receive the Ambassadors of Peace. The region is so bare of trees and houses, that the eye can catch a sight of the scanty, yet well-marshalled and orderly procession, from the time when it is first on its march, and follow it as it grows into distinctness, and opens into twice twenty spare and way-worn forms, clothed in the dark uniform of the Benedictine order. At their head, preceded by the cross-bearer, is one of statelier mien and more majestic bearing than his fellows; "higher than any of the people from his shoulders and upward,"⁸ but withal of sweet though reverend countenance. Louder and louder, yet solemn and subdued when loudest, the notes of a plaintive, monotonous chant,⁹ swell upon the ear; drowned, perhaps, at short intervals, by the heavy dash of the tide, or alternating, (for could Nature wear angry looks and seem to utter chiding words that gracious day?) with its hushed and as if respectful breathings. As the train nears the place of reception, the words of the chant become faintly audible, and disclose a prayer for mercy upon England. Was there not an unseen choir bearing part the while in those solemn tones of supplication? Were there not angelic

⁸ See the description of St. Augustine's person at the end of Gocelin's life. (Bollandists, 26 May.)

⁹ The reformation of the ecclesiastical chant, which is due to St. Gregory the Great, took place shortly before St. Augustine's mission.

assistants at that devout offering, to present it, as incense, before the Mercy-seat on high? Was holy Alban, think you, England's protomartyr, absent from that solemnity, and mute in that chorus of suppliant voices? Or Germanus, her zealous champion, or they who first encountered perils by sea and land to plant the cross in her soil?

At length the procession stopped, and the chant ceased. The king bade the Missionaries be seated; and Augustine is said to have addressed him to the following effect:

"Your everlasting peace, O king, and that of your kingdom, is the object we desire to promote in coming hither; we bring you, as we have already made known, tidings of never-ending joy. If you receive them, you will be blessed for ever, both here and in the Kingdom which is without end. The Creator and Redeemer of the world has opened to mankind the Kingdom of Heaven and of citizens of the earth makes men inhabitants of a celestial city.—For God so loved the world that He gave His Only-begotten Son for the world, even as that Only-begotten testifies, that all who believe in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life. For with so boundless a love did the same Son of God love the world, His creatures, as not only to become Man among men, but to deign to suffer death for men, even the death of the Cross. For so pleased it His unspeakable clemency to bruise the Devil, not in the majesty of his own Divine Nature, but in the weakness of our flesh, and so to snatch us, the worthy prey of the Evil one, by the unworthy punishment of the Cross, from the jaws of that most wicked prince. Whose Incarnate Deity was manifested by innumerable displays of power, by

the healing of all diseases, and the performance of all virtues. He shewed Himself God and Lord over the sky, stars, earth, sea, and hell. He calmed, by His authority, the winds and the sea : He trod the waves of the sea, as though they had been a solid plain ; at length, deigning as Man to die for men, on the third day He rose from the dead as God ; and, by His Effulgence, adorned with brighter light the sun, which had been darkened at the death of its Creator. He rose, I say, that He might raise us ; He ascended into the Heavens, that He might gather us together there in triumph. From thence He shall come as Judge of all the world, that He may place believers in His Kingdom, and condemn unbelievers for ever. Do not, therefore, most illustrious king, regard us as superstitious, because we have been at pains to come from Rome to your dominions for the sake of your salvation and that of your subjects, and to force upon an unknown people benefits, as it were, against their will. Be assured, most loving king, that we have purposed this, constrained by the necessity of great love. For we long, beyond all the desires and glory of the world, to have as many fellow-citizens with us as we can in the Kingdom of our God ; and we strive with all our efforts to prevent those from perishing, who may be advanced to the company of the holy Angels. For this goodwill the loving-kindness of our Christ has everywhere infused, by the inestimable sweetness of His Spirit, into all the preachers of His Truth, that, laying aside the thought of their own necessities, they burn with zeal for the salvation of all nations, and esteem every people as their parents and sons, their brethren and kinsmen ; and, embracing all in the single love of God, labour to bring them to everlasting ages of

all happiness and festal joys. Such men as these, standard-bearers of our King, made witnesses of God by numberless miracles, through swords, through fires, through beasts, through every kind of torment and death, have with unconquered courage subdued the world to their Saviour. Long since has Rome, long since has Greece, with the kings and princes of the earth, and isles of the Gentiles, drawn by the invitations of these preachers, with all the world, rejoiced to worship the Lord of kings and to serve Him for ever, by whom and with whom, they may reign eternally. Moved, too, by such love as this, Gregory, the present Father of all Christendom, thirsting most ardently for your salvation, would have come to you, hindered by no fear of punishment or death, had he been able (as he is not) to leave the care of so many souls committed to his charge. And therefore he has sent us in his place to open to you the way of everlasting light and the gate of the Kingdom of Heaven ; in which, if despising the idols of devils, you refuse not to enter through Christ, you shall most assuredly reign for ever.”¹

Such was the tenour of the address which Augustine delivered to the king. He spoke it, as St. Bede tells us, “sitting by the king’s command.” Ethelbert’s answer was as follows : “Fair, truly, are the words and promises which you bring me, but they are new to me and of doubtful authority. I cannot, therefore, accept them, to the neglect of those religious observances, to which, in common with the whole English people, I have so long adhered. However, you are foreigners, who have

¹ This discourse is given, from tradition, apparently, or pious conjecture, rather than documentary authority, in Gocelin’s Life.—Bollandists. May 26.

come a long way to my country, and, as far as I find myself able to understand the object of your visit, you are come with the desire of imparting to me what you yourselves believe to be true and excellent. We are far, then, from wishing to molest you; rather we would receive you with kindness and hospitality. We shall, accordingly, take measures for supplying you with all necessary articles of food. Neither do we forbid you to preach, and make what converts you can to the faith of your religion.”²

King Ethelbert was as good as his word. Upon his return to Canterbury, he gave orders that a suitable house should be prepared for the reception of the missionaries, that a table should be kept for them at his own expense, and that no obstacles should be put in the way of their preaching. In due time St. Augustine and his companions quitted Thanet for Canterbury, and entered the city in the same solemn order which had been observed in approaching the king in Thanet. The tall silver cross was again uplifted, and the sacred banner displayed; and as they passed the little church of St. Martin's, they chanted, as in the name of its inhabitants, “Lord, we pray Thee of Thy mercy, take away Thine anger from this city, and from Thy holy house; for we have sinned. Alleluia.” The poor idolaters of the place marvelled at the strange sight; curiously staring, now at the sunburnt complexions, mortified aspect, and unwonted garb, of the missionaries; now at the gleaming cross, now at the painted banner. Little did they deem that this meek and peaceful company was, in truth, an army of war-

² S. Bede, lib. i. 25.

riors coming to take possession of their city, and lead themselves captive ; little could they recognize, on that banner, the image of their Conqueror, or, in that cross, the instrument of His power. One inmate of the place, at least, there was, who discerned in that lowly procession a troop of dauntless warriors, and whose heart beat high with presages of victory,—queen Bertha.

CHAPTER XI.

ST. AUGUSTINE AT CANTERBURY.

THE foundation was now laid of that goodly work which had occupied so chief a place in the wishes and prayers of the great St. Gregory from the day of his providential encounter with the English slaves in the market-place at Rome. The very prediction which the holy Father had uttered on that occasion had received its literal fulfilment ; Alleluia had been chanted in the English dominions ; though as yet it was but the "Lord's song in a strange land." Still, the seed was sown, and the light kindled : twelve poor fishermen sufficed to convert the world, and here was little England allotted forty "fishers of men ;" few labourers, indeed, for so plentiful a harvest, as men might count of few and many ; few, if the prospects of return were to be measured by the degree of physical capability in the workmen, or the amount of known resources for the work ; but a supply far more than equal to the occasion, if we take into account the quickening power of holiness, the manifold fruit of self-denial, the intercessions of the Church, and the blessing of St. Peter.

The monks, on their arrival at Canterbury, were lodged by Ethelbert in the part of the city called Stablegate, or "the resting-place," as being the quarter in which strangers were usually accommodated,—a name which it retains to this day. The house, therefore, would be in the present borough of Staplegate, to the

north of the "Archbishop's palace," built by Lanfranc, the ruins of which are still visible. Here St. Augustine and his companions remained till Ethelbert, on his conversion, made over to them his own royal palace, out of which grew the Monastery of Christ Church. Ethelbert's own palace was, therefore, within a stone's throw of the house in which the missionaries were lodged on their arrival, so that the king must have enjoyed constant opportunities of witnessing the devout and holy conversation of the strangers. "They lived," says the historian, "like Apostles ; frequent in prayers, watchings, and fastings. They preached the Word of Life to all who were ready to hear it, receiving from their disciples so much only as was necessary for a bare subsistence, and in all things acting in strict conformity with their profession and doctrine. In truth, they seemed to put aside the good things of this world, as property not belonging to them. They bore disappointments and hindrances with a calm and cheerful spirit, and would readily have died, had such been God's will, in defence of the truth they preached." The result may easily be imagined. "Many believed, and were baptized, won over by the simplicity of their blameless lives, and the sweetness of their heavenly doctrine."³

The church of St. Martin's was allotted to the monks for the public celebrations of religion. There they "chanted psalms, prayed, said Mass, preached, and baptized." For these "forty's sake," it pleased the Divine Mercy to save the city ; conversions followed one another in rapid succession, till at length He who "turneth kings' hearts as the rivers of water," vouchsafed to Ethelbert himself the first motions of His enlightening

³ S. Bede, lib. i. c. 26.

Spirit. We have spoken of prayers, and fastings, and the silent power of holiness, as the main instruments towards this blessed result ; but truth to history obliges us to take notice of another and more conspicuous spiritual weapon used by the Providence of God in turning the hearts of the English nation to the obedience of Christ. Those miraculous gifts, which at a somewhat later period were even profusely displayed in this island, had already begun to manifest themselves. St. Bede, accordingly, enumerates, among the reasons which led Ethelbert to embrace the Christian Faith, the “multitude of miracles whereby the truth of the promises was accredited.” We give this statement as we find it in the pages of a most trustworthy historian, under a deep sense of the obligation resting upon us to impress, and, if so be, inflict, such solemn and mysterious facts upon the attention of a sceptical age, and especially in a country from which, under the joint and kindred influences of heresy, and the idolatry of wealth, the spirit of child-like faith has well-nigh departed.

The missionaries had now, according to our calculation, been about a quarter of a year at Canterbury ; for we suppose them to have landed in the spring, and a few days after to have proceeded to the royal city, destined in the counsels of Divine Providence to become henceforth the central source of religious blessings to England, as it had now for some time been the seat of the court and government. Easter had returned with its glorious fifty days ; but not on Saxon England, if we except one favoured spot, had beamed the joys of that happy spring-time of Christendom. In the little church of St. Martin alone had swelled the high notes of Catholic psalmody ; and when those soul-stirring words struck on our missionaries’ ears, “*Resurrexi, et adhuc tecum*

sum, Alleluia!" were they not cheered in their loneliness by the thought that HE, the Unchangeable amid change, the Same "to day" in glory as "yesterday" in the grave, and "before yesterday" on the cross, was still and ever at their side?

That was the last Easter-tide which brought not its own appropriate joy to Saxon England. And even then might the eye of faith descry on every side the signs of an approaching spiritual resurrection harmonizing with the appearances of nature.

Who that has been at Canterbury, has not visited the church of St. Martin? and who that has visited it with such knowledge of the history of England as most educated persons now possess, can have failed to experience many strange emotions on entering beneath its low portal, and surveying its scanty proportions? After all the changes wrought by time in the actual building, — which, with the exception of a few red Roman bricks still discernible in the eastern exterior wall, has probably quite lost its identity with the original fabric,—and notwithstanding the desolating ravages which Reformers and Puritans have perpetrated in the sacred interior, it is hard not to reflect that here, so runs the tradition, queen Bertha prayed for heathen England; here St. Luidhard and St. Augustine of Canterbury offered the holy Sacrifice of the Altar; and here king Ethelbert, laying aside his earthly crown, and sceptre of temporal sovereignty, was admitted as a little child into the Kingdom of Heaven.

It was on the Feast of Pentecost, June 2nd, A. D. 597, or rather on the Eve of that Feast, that Ethelbert, and his queen, attended by a numerous train of nobles, left their royal palace (which lay a little to the north-west of the present cathedral), and proceeded to the

church of St. Martin's, distant the better part of a mile. The rumour of the king's conversion had brought a vast multitude of strangers to the city, not from other parts of Kent only, but even from distant quarters.⁴ On entering the church, (which is said to have been richly adorned for the occasion), queen Bertha repaired to her customary place of devotion, the king remaining at the entrance. Then, after a portion of the service has been gone through at the altar, the priest who had there occupied the central position descends and advances towards the Font, which is of course near the door. He is distinguished from the rest no less by the unusual height of his person, than by his richer vestments, and as in loco pontificis, though not as yet himself of episcopal dignity, he is preceded, according to ancient usage, by two attendants with lighted tapers. The ecclesiastic in question is, we need not say, no other than St. Augustine himself. Having reached the Font, he addresses the people in the usual form: "The Lord be with you," and is answered, "And with Thy Spirit." He then prays after this manner: "Almighty and everlasting God, be present at the mysteries of Thy great mercy; be present at Thy Sacraments; and send forth the Spirit of adoption to create anew [this] soul begotten to Thee in the laver of Baptism, that so, what is to be wrought by the ministry of our humility, may be accomplished by the effect of Thy power. Through our Lord."

At the conclusion of this prayer, the "Consecration of the Font" is entoned after the manner of the Preface at Mass. This ended, the following prayer is chanted: "O God, who, by Thine invisible power, dost work, after a wondrous manner, the effect of Thy Sacraments;

⁴ Gocelin in Bolland.

we acknowledge ourselves unworthy to perform Thy holy mysteries ; yet forsake not, we beseech Thee, the gifts of Thy grace, and incline towards our supplications the ears of Thy pity. O God, whose Spirit moved on the face of the waters at the creation of the world, grant that the nature of this water may receive the virtue of sanctification. O God, who didst by the water of the deluge purge away the sins of a guilty world, signifying thereby the grace of Regeneration, so that in the mystery of one and the same element might be shewn forth both the end of vices and the beginning of virtues ; look, O Lord, upon the face of Thy Church, and multiply in it Thy regenerations ; Thou, who by the torrent of Thine overflowing grace dost make glad Thy City, and open the fountain of Baptism for the renewing of all the nations of the earth, that by the power of Thy Majesty they may receive from the Holy Spirit the grace of Thine Only-begotten."

Here the officiating priest makes the Sign of the Cross upon the water, and adds :

" May He, by the secret admixture of His light, render fruitful this water prepared for the regeneration of men ; that, being endued with sanctification, a heavenly offspring may spring into newness of life from the immaculate womb of the Divine Font. And may Grace, as a mother, bring forth all into a common infancy, how different soever in sex or age. Depart hence, at God's bidding, every unclean spirit ; depart, every wickedness of diabolical craft. May there be here no evil admixture ; no treachery to circumvent, no secret poison to insinuate itself, no defilement to corrupt and destroy. May this creature [of water] be holy and innocent, free from every approach of the Enemy, and purged by the departure of every vicious influence ; may it be a fountain of Life,

a stream of Regeneration, a wave of purification, that all they who are to be washed in this laver of health, may obtain, by the operation in them of the Holy Spirit, the grace of a perfect cleansing.

“ Wherefore ✠ I bless thee, creature of water, ✠ in the name of the living ✠ God, of that holy God, who, at the creation of the world by His Word, who was in the beginning, separated thee from the dry land ; whose Spirit moved upon thee, who bade thee flow from Paradise and water the whole of the earth by four streams ; who, when thou wert bitter in the desert, poured sweetness into thee, and made thee palatable, and who commanded thee to flow from a rock to refresh His thirsting people. I bless ✠ thee also in the Name of Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who, at Canā in Galilee, converted thee by a wonderful miracle of His power into wine ; who walked upon thee with His feet, and was baptized in thee by John in the Jordan. Who gave thee forth together with blood out of His side, and commanded His disciples to baptize believers in thee, saying, ‘ Go, teach all men, baptizing them in the Name,’ &c.”

Here the priest changes his voice into the tone of reading:

“ Do Thou, O God, be present in mercy with us who obey Thy commandments ; graciously breathe upon this element, bless this pure water with the breath of Thy mouth, that, besides that natural power with which it cleanses our bodies, it may also become efficacious to the purifying of the soul.”

Hereupon the two taper-bearers withdraw into the sacristy. Then, breathing three times into the water, he says :

“ May the virtue of Thy Spirit descend, O Lord,

into the fulness of this Font, and make the whole of this water fruitful with the power of Regeneration. May the stains of all sin be here blotted out. May that nature which was formed after Thy image, and which is now reformed in honour of its first beginning, be cleansed from all defilement of the old man ; that they who receive this Sacrament of Regeneration may be born anew into the infancy of true innocence ; through our Lord Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who will come to judge the quick and dead, and the world by fire."

Then, taking the golden vessel with the chrism, he pours the chrism into the font in the manner of a cross, and parts the water with his hand.

Then the priest, leading the candidate to the water and holding him in it, demands, "What is thy name?" And then rehearses to him the Articles of the Creed ; at the end of which the candidate answers, "I believe." He proceeds, "Wilt thou be baptized?"—Answer, "I will." Then he baptizes him in the customary form.

On the baptized coming out of the font, he is presented to one of the presbyters, who makes on his forehead with the chrism the sign of the cross, adding, "May Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath regenerated thee with water and with the Holy Spirit, and who hath given thee remission of all thy sins, Himself anoint thee with the chrism of salvation unto life eternal. *Rz. Amen.*"

At this point in the service the king would have received the Sacrament of Confirmation, had St. Augustine been competent at that time to administer it. As no bishop, however, was present, we may conclude that a Litany was then said at the font, while the principal priest took his place at the altar. Then may have come the prayer specially appointed for the Vigil of

Pentecost, "post Ascensum Fontis." "Grant, we beseech Thee, Almighty God, that the brightness of Thy glory may shine forth upon us, and the light of Thy Light confirm by the illumination of the Holy Spirit the hearts of those who have been regenerated by Thy grace through our Lord."

Previously to this prayer, the church had been illuminated in preparation for the Mass which was to follow.

Such was the Form of Baptism used in the time of St. Gregory the Great, according to the Ritual of the Church, as it had been recently set in order by that Pontiff. We have here given it entire, so as to enable the reader to make himself present at a solemnity, the like to which, in interest and importance, has not often occurred in the annals of our country. It should be observed, however, that, either the whole, or but a part, of this Service, would be used on the occasion in question, according to circumstances of which we are not at this time cognizant. Thus it is not unlikely that the earlier portion of the Office, as it has been now set forth, may have been used, not at Ethelbert's baptism, which was solemnized on Whitsun-eve, but on the Holy Saturday before, when, perhaps, the water was consecrated in anticipation of the probable conversions. It is also next to certain that many other baptisms took place at the same time with the king's; for, on the one hand, we know from St. Bede, that Ethelbert's was but one of a number of conversions which followed rapidly upon the preaching of the missionaries; and, on the other, if these conversions took place between Easter and Pentecost (which were the two great seasons for baptism), the actual admission of the converts into the Church would be deferred to the latter

period, and the interval would be occupied in the preliminary course of catechetical instruction. We have also seen that other changes in the service were rendered necessary by the want of a bishop. This need, however, was no long time after supplied. Within five months of Ethelbert's baptism, St. Augustine was on his way back to France, where he obtained consecration to the English Archiepiscopate at the hands of Virgilius, Archbishop of Arles and Metropolitan (who had received a mandate from the Pope to that effect),⁵ assisted by other prelates of France. This was on the 16th of November 597, after the commencement of the Feast of Sunday the 17th. Immediately upon his consecration, St. Augustine returned to Canterbury, where he was received with great joy by the king and people, and solemnly inaugurated as Archbishop of that See.

During the five months which passed between the baptism of Ethelbert and St. Augustine's visit to Arles, our Lord had made daily additions to His Church in England. The effect of the king's conversion was, as might have been expected, quite electrical. The people, animated by the example of their sovereign, flocked in multitudes to hear the Word of God, not, however, by constraint, but willingly; for Ethelbert peremptorily refused to employ any kind of compulsion in bringing over his subjects to the Christian Faith, having learned, says St. Bede, a far different doctrine from his new masters. As many as were prepared of their own free choice to take Christ's easy yoke upon them, the king received most joyfully and lovingly; accounting them, says the historian, no longer as his

⁵ S. Bede, lib. i. c. 27.

subjects on earth, but rather as his fellow-citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven.⁶

So mightily did the word of God grow and prevail, even during the first few months of the missionaries' stay in England, and while as yet their ministrations were confined to a single city, that, on the Christmas-day of the year in which they landed, no less than ten thousand of the English received the grace of Life. Oh, what delight did these tidings bring to the heart of the good St. Gregory. It so happened that the holy Father laboured that year under a more than usual pressure of bodily illness; but God, who is wont to send His Saints two joys for one sorrow, was pleased to refresh the spirit of this afflicted servant with a double consolation at one and the same time. His friend Eulogius, Bishop of Alexandria, had written to acquaint him with the prosperous condition of that Church, and he answers by telling him of the recent news from England.

"Full well do I know that, in all your good deeds, you deeply sympathize with the joy of others. I will repay, then, your favour, and reply to your tidings by others not very dissimilar. The English, a people shut up in a little corner of the world, have been up to this time unbelievers, nay, worshippers of stocks and stones. And now, by the help of your prayers, it has pleased God to put into my mind to send among them as a preacher, Augustine, one of the brethren of my monastery. He by my authority⁷ has been consecrated bishop by the bishops of Germany,⁸ and by their assistance has been brought to the afore-mentioned nation, which

⁶ S. Bede, lib. i. 26.

⁷ Datâ à me licentiâ.

⁸ The Franks were often called Germans, as being of common origin.

is truly the very end of the world. And news has just reached me of his well-being and wonderful deeds ; that either he, or those who were sent with him, have so shone out by the gift of miracles among this people, that they seem quite like Apostles in the signs they have wrought. And on the Feast of our Lord's Nativity, in this first year of the Indiction, as I understand from the same our brother and fellow-bishop, more than ten thousand English were baptized. I have mentioned these facts that you may know what your prayers have wrought at the farthest extremity of the world, while you are talking to me about the people of Alexandria. While your holy doings are made manifest in the place where you are, the fruit of your prayers is apparent in places where you are not." ⁹

The question may be asked, Why did St. Augustine go so far as Arles to be consecrated ? The answer to this question may be obtained from the letters of St. Gregory the Great, and besides its interest in this place, it throws valuable light upon the ancient prerogatives of the See of St. Peter. The Archbishop of Arles had a precedence among the bishops of France, and was at this time also vicar of the Holy See. St. Gregory speaks, in his reply to St. Augustine's ninth Question upon the English Church, of the Pall as a privilege of the See of Arles in the times of his predecessors.¹ In days, then, which so early as the sixth century could be described as ancient,² the Church of Rome was what may be called the fountain of honour to Western Christendom. In another of St. Gregory's letters, we find him constituting this same Virgilius, through whom the Apostolical succession was transmitted to the English Church,

⁹ S. Greg. lib. viii. Ep. 30.

¹ Lib. xi. Ep. 64.

² Antiquis prædecessorum meorum temporibus.

have also transmitted the Pall, which your Brotherhood is to use in church at the celebration of Mass only. Should any Bishop wish to go to a distance, it will not be lawful for him to pass into other dioceses without authority from your Holiness. Should any question of the Faith, or other grave matter, arise among the Bishops, let it be discussed and determined in an assembly of twelve of their number. If it cannot be thus settled, let the rights of the question be discussed, and the decision referred to me. God Almighty take you into His keeping, and grant your new honours may turn to the profit of your soul !”³

³ Lib. v. Ep. 53.

CHAPTER XII.

MUNIFICENCE OF ETHELBERT.—FIRST ANGLO-SAXON
CHURCHES AND MONASTERIES.

It has before now been observed, and indeed will hardly be disputed, that the impression which Scripture gives of kingly power is, on the whole, that rather of an antagonist, than an ally, of God's Church. Kings and queens have, no doubt, a special and exalted place assigned them in the household of the Faith; but, since they cannot properly rise, except through humility, nor rule, except by submission, it is no wonder that, as a matter of fact, they have so rarely been seen to occupy it in a becoming manner. Considering how deeply the love of preeminence is ingrained in unregenerate human nature, and how thickly the rich and great are beset on every side with the temptations to a sin from which not even the lowest stations are exempt, it is no proof of any especial ungodliness in those who are called to the high places of the earth, that there should not have been more among them to earn the crown of sanctity amid the perils of a throne; rather it is a witness to the sovereign and all-subduing power of Divine grace that there should have been so many. Our Lord's very birth gave occasion to the kingly character to manifest itself in those two extreme and opposite shapes which it has ever since been apt to assume, or to which it has, at all events, continually tended, in its bearings towards our Lord, that is to say, towards His Holy Ca-

tholic Church ; the shape of rivalry, jealousy, and hatred, as portrayed in Herod the Great, and that of devout reverence and implicit submission, as exemplified in the Magians. Herod seeking the life of the Divine Infant, and the wise men of the East prostrate at His feet and offering Him of their best, were the types and the predecessors of two several classes of sovereign rulers, whom Prophecy distinctly foreshewed, and History has no less distinctly exhibited ; those, on the one hand, who have “taken counsel against the Lord and against His Christ ;” and those, on the other, who have “come bending” to the footstool of the King of kings, and “ministered” to the glory of His earthly dwelling-place. And well, indeed, had it been for the Church, were there not also a third course which kingly power has been apt to take with respect to her, midway between avowed hostility and implicit submission,—the patronizing and conciliatory line, such as the great pursue towards powerful inferiors, or the politic towards useful auxiliaries. Truly, the Church, when staunch to her principles, recognizes no patrons of this world. She is the dispenser of patronage, not the object of it. She gives patrons to others ; not placing herself under the protection of kings, who often, with flattery on their tongues, cherish guile in their hearts ; but rather distributing the nations of the world under the high and beneficent tutelage of her own glorified Saints. And, as she recognizes no patrons among the great, so courts she no allies among the powerful. For alliances are founded on the principle of mutual concession ; whereas the world has every thing to gain from the Church, and nothing to give in return, which the Church does not account rather an encumbrance than a boon. In short, the Church knows of no relation towards herself but that of the loyal subject and

the loving child ; and where men are not content to defer to her as a Queen, and cling to her as a Mother, far better is it for her, and not much worse for themselves, that they should take the side of her declared enemies ; be “ cold,” rather than “ lukewarm ;” for decision of purpose, and consistency of action, even on the wrong side, are ever both more respectable, and more hopeful, than middle courses and incompatible allegiances.

That especial temper of self-renouncing devotion, and chivalrous homage to the Catholic Church, which admits of such splendid illustration from the pages of Anglo-Saxon history, appears to have been with Ethelbert quite a matter of Christian instinct. From the moment of his baptism it never seems to have even crossed his mind that he was to regard the Authoress of his birth into the Kingdom of Heaven otherwise than as a Parent, whose bounties to him no gifts could repay, and whose claims upon him no devotion could express. His great aim seems to have been, not to engage the affections of his subjects towards himself as an object of ultimate loyalty, but to unite them with himself in common loyalty to the Church. Accordingly, when St. Augustine returned with episcopal powers from France, his royal disciple seems to have been animated but by one wish—that of placing, not his house only, but his city, and even his kingdom, at the Saint’s command. That very kingdom which, in days of old, he had eagerly sought, and hardly won, he now hastens to deliver over to a body of men who in the eyes of the world must have seemed no better than mere adventurers and fanatics. All which we hear of king Ethelbert, even before his conversion, seems to prove that he was earnest and conscientious, as a heathen, according to his opportunities ; and this is ever the true road to brighter light and fuller grace. No

doubt, his union with Bertha had been a great blessing to him ; yet her influence seems rather to have leavened his mind, than wholly formed it. In his youth, he was actuated by motives of ambition ; but, considering the fearful extent to which this sin prevails among Christians, nay, and is even countenanced and vindicated by them, it would indeed be extravagant to make it a severe ground of charge against a heathen, though of course a sin it is, whether in heathen or Christian. But from more debasing vices Ethelbert, as far as we know, was free. He seems to have been a true Saxon, as Saxons were when they came fresh from their native air, and before they had lost their indigenous virtues through the effect of luxurious habits. He was brave, though as yet he lacked a suitable cause in which to exercise his valour ; and, for all that appears, he was temperate, like a true soldier as he was, though he “did it for a corruptible crown.” Moreover, it is rather prominently brought before us in history, that he was constant at his devotions ; and could there, under the circumstances, have been better materials to form the saintly heart withal ? Once more, his behaviour towards the holy missionaries from the moment of their arrival was such as could not have been exceeded for kindness, generosity, and discretion. Had he been a self-willed and narrow-hearted prince,—nay, had he been otherwise than a very truth-loving and noble-minded one,—he might quite fairly and reasonably have forbid them his country, as foreigners demanding entrance upon an inadmissible pretext. Yet he received them kindly, treated them hospitably, and gave a patient and candid hearing to the message which they brought with them. Nor was this the indifference of a politician, thinking all religions equally true or equally false ; for, even while evidently interested in

the tidings which Augustine announced to him, Ethelbert, as we have seen, made a discreet and conscientious reserve in favour of the religion of his country, which he was not prepared at once to give up. Yet did he not cling pertinaciously to a system, which, being essentially false, could not possibly have found its answer in the conscience of a good man. "Bigotry" is a much abused word; but we must not be led by the popular abuse of the term to forget that the temper exists which that term in its true sense expresses, and a very evil temper it is. We do not hesitate then to say, in a phrase which has an ill sound but a legitimate use, that king Ethelbert was "no bigot;" meaning by that phrase, not that he would have shrunk from fencing the true Faith round with anathemas against heresy (which is piety, not bigotry), but that he did not suffer his attachment to a false religion (to which, nevertheless, as the best that had come before him, and as incomparably better than unbelief, he was rightly attached) to prejudice his reception of the true.

Ethelbert received St. Augustine, on his return from Arles, as a king should receive an archbishop, and a disciple, his spiritual father. The welcome is described as having been at once truly magnificent and most hearty. When the first greetings were over, the king announced his intention of surrendering his palace at Canterbury for the use of the monks, and of retiring, himself, to Reculver. The King's palace, as we have already said, was not far from the house in Stablegate which had been appropriated to the missionaries on their first arrival, and lay, probably, between what was afterwards the site of the Archbishop's palace, and the cathedral. The ruins, or at least the vestiges, of the ancient archiepiscopal residence, are still to be seen,

including the remains of the study from which St. Thomas passed to the cathedral on the memorable 29th of December, when he received the crown of martyrdom. But the reader must not confound this building (which is not older than Lanfranc's age) with the palace of king Ethelbert. This latter, from the time of its passing into the hands of St. Augustine, ceased to be a palace, and became a monastery. As such, it remained till the archiepiscopate of Lanfranc, who first erected it into a dwelling-house for himself.

Imagine a royal personage now-a-days giving up his principal palace to a body of monks, and leaving them, as it were, to represent him at the seat of his court and government! We are not criticising this procedure, but merely drawing attention to it as a most remarkable phenomenon. What are called "safe" men would probably consider the act as one of downright madness; but this alone does not prove it such, for Festus counted St. Paul as a madman; nay, even of our Blessed Lord there were those who said, "He is beside Himself." In one point of view, at least, the posture of ecclesiastical affairs in England, at the time of which we write, is not a little singular; as illustrating, namely, the words of our Lord, which have been chosen as the motto of this series of Lives; "The meek shall inherit the earth." A year ago, and this mission, now so prosperous and triumphant, was on the point of being abandoned, in consequence of the apparent failure of all human resources; and here are those way-worn and disheartened travellers housed in the very palace of the king of England, and that king become a voluntary exile from his home and from his court, as desiring only that Christ should be magnified in his stead. Let all such as are inclined to doubt if

St. Augustine's path were indeed illustrated by miracles, consider well with themselves, whether (as has been said of the original dissemination of Christianity) any miracle which they are asked to believe is so wonderful as would be the fact of such a result having been brought to pass without miracle.

But, at any rate, it will be said, that king Ethelbert, in retiring from Canterbury, was guilty of quitting his post of duty, and must surely have degraded himself in the eyes of his subjects. We shall find, however, from the sequel, that the latter years of his reign were, at all events, no less prosperous than the former, even as respected the temporal interests of his kingdom ; though these were not immediately in his eye when he thought fit to adopt the strange line of policy upon which we are commenting. England does not seem to have suffered in any way from the counsels upon which Ethelbert appears to have leant in the latter years of his life. For kings, no less than private men, and nations, no less than the individuals who compose them, have an undoubted share in the promise, " Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Near Ethelbert's palace there is said to have been a church, which had been built by Christians as early as the days of the Romans. St. Martin's being generally mentioned as the only ecclesiastical building in Canterbury which, previously to the arrival of St. Augustine, the Christian queen had succeeded in reclaiming from heathen uses, we are to conclude that this church must have been given up, along with the rest, to the service of idolatry. But Ethelbert, when he resigned his palace to St. Augustine, included it in the donation, and eagerly seconded the measures which the Archbishop

forthwith proceeded to take for its purification, reparation, and enlargement. Such were the first beginnings of the Metropolitan Church of Christ at Canterbury. Of the original fabric (which fell a victim to the fury of the Danes) neither trace nor memorial exists ; excepting the tradition of a special providence vouchsafed at the prayer of Archbishop Odo, by which, while roofing, it was preserved from the effects of weather at a peculiarly tempestuous season. The Cathedral was rebuilt in the earlier part of the 11th century by Archbishop Agelnoth, but was again miserably reduced by fire and dilapidations ; so that Archbishop Lanfranc had to rebuild it almost from the first, a work which he completed in little more than seven years, and dedicated it anew, as some say, to the honour of the Ever-blessed Trinity.

Canterbury Cathedral, then, was originally one of the cluster of buildings which formed the Monastery of Christ-Church. "England," says Reyner, "from its first reception of the Faith, has had two kinds of monasteries : the one, cloistral ; the other, cathedral. Those were called Cloistral which were governed by an abbot, or, where there was no abbot, by a prior. Those were Cathedral where the Bishop was Abbot, and the Convent was the Chapter of the Cathedral church ; and so the monks were Cathedral canons, performing all those offices which secular canons were accustomed to perform in secular cathedrals."⁴

Thus Christ-church was a Cathedral monastery, and preserved its monastic character till the change of reli-

⁴ De Apostol. Bened. in Angliâ, Tract. i. Sect. i. § 17. Upon this Mr. Somner remarks (History of Canterbury, p. 83, Ed. 1703), "I do not remember that in Cathedral monasteries the bishop was ever reputed abbot, but the prior, who was in the place of abbot, chief over the monks. And the Capitular acts did run alike in the same form

gion in the 16th century.⁵ St. Augustine became at once Archbishop of Canterbury, and Abbot of Christ-Church ; and his companions, canons of the Cathedral, and brethren of the Monastery.

St. Gregory appears, from a letter to St. Augustine of several years' later date, to have contemplated fixing the English primacy at London, which had been its seat in the time of the Britons. But several circumstances united in pointing out Canterbury as its more natural and appropriate position. There the Gospel had been first preached in England. There was the central seat of Ethelbert's government ; whereas London belonged not to Ethelbert, but to his nephew Sebert. And the rank which the kingdom of Kent had in Ethelbert's reign come to hold among the provinces of the heptarchy would be a farther reason for selecting Canterbury as the ecclesiastical metropolis of England. The transfer of the primacy from London to Canterbury was expressly confirmed by the subsequent pontiffs, Boniface and Honorius ; of whom the former, addressing St. Justus, successor to St. Augustine in the see of Canterbury, writes, "We confirm and command that the metropolitanical see of all Britain be for ever after in the city of Canterbury ; and we make a perpetual and unchangeable decree, that all provinces of the kingdom of England be for ever subject to the metropolitanical church of that place." And Honorius writes, "We command all the churches and provinces of England to be subject to

as well in Cathedral as in Cloistral monasteries,—Abbas et Capitulum, Prior et Capitulum.

⁵ The other Cathedral monasteries which were despoiled at the same period were Durham, Winchester, Ely, Norwich, Worcester, Bath, Coventry, and Rochester ; at York, London, and Salisbury, the capitular bodies had been previously secularized.—Dugd. Monastic.

your jurisdiction ; and that the metropolitical see and archiepiscopal dignity, and the primacy of all the churches of England, be fixed and remain in Canterbury, and never be transferred through any kind of evil persuasion by any one to any other place.” And this decision was afterwards adopted in honour of St. Augustine by a council of the English nation ; for, according to Malmesbury, Kenulphus king of Mercia wrote to Pope Leo III. “ Because Augustine, of blessed memory, who in the time of Pope Gregory, preached the word of God to the English nation, and presided over the Saxon churches, died in the same city, and his body was buried in the church which his successor Laurentius dedicated to St. Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, it seemed good to all the wise men of our nation, that the metropolitical dignity should be fixed in that city where resteth the body of him that planted the truth of the Christian Faith in these parts.⁶

In the city of Canterbury, between the cathedral and St. Martin's, lies the diminutive church of St. Pancras. This also is a monument of St. Augustine's, and (as we shall now begin to call him, St.) Ethelbert's piety. St. Pancras' was the church, it will be remembered, in which the king used to assist at idolatrous rites before his conversion ; and he would have it among the first of those which were cleansed from heathen pollution, and converted into temples of the Living God. He accordingly made it over, with the land adjoining, to St. Augustine. By him it was duly purified, and consecrated in honour of St. Pancras, who suffered martyrdom at the age of fourteen, and has ever been accounted the especial patron of children and young persons. St. Pancras appears to have been selected as patron of this church

⁶ Vide Somner's History of Canterbury, with Battely's additions.

in reference to St. Gregory's interview with the English slaves at Rome. The Evil Spirit, as tradition says, did not relinquish his hold over this church without a fierce and terrific struggle. It is related, that, when St. Augustine first celebrated mass within it, the building was violently shaken, as if by an earthquake. Thorn, the chronicler, speaks of marks as apparent in his time upon the southern exterior wall, which were accounted as "marks of the Beast ;" and Mr. Somner, the historian of Canterbury, implies that some such appearance was still to be traced in the ruins of the church as late as the year 1640. On the other hand, St. Bede the Venerable, who flourished little more than a century after the period at which the circumstance is said to have happened, and who gained his information, as he tells us,⁷ relative to the transactions at Canterbury, from Albinus, abbot of St. Augustine's monastery, is silent upon the subject. No doubt, St. Bede's silence is observable, and the marks on the wall admit of being explained in other than supernatural ways. Yet, if St. Bede is to furnish evidence on one side, he must in fairness be brought forward as a witness on the other also ; and there is no doubt that he speaks to the fact of miracles generally as rife at the time of St. Augustine's visit to England, so as to give the utmost probability to particular occurrences of an alleged supernatural character. Under these circumstances, it may reasonably be questioned whether his silence upon the wonderful phenomena which are said to have accompanied the first consecration of the Host at St. Pancras' is so conclusive against the story, as his general testimony to the frequency of such manifestations at the time is in favour of it. They, at all events, who remember how violently the Evil Spirit once convulsed a body from

⁷ Prolog. in Hist. Eccl.

which he was being ejected by Divine power,⁸ and who have perhaps been led to refer the mysterious sufferings of holy persons on their death-bed to some similar conflict between the Holy Spirit labouring to put His final seal upon an elect soul, and the Tempter trying to regain his possession of it by a last and desperate effort, will see nothing to startle them in the fact of the Devil even visibly contending for a familiar haunt, when Christ first glorified it by His presence, and leaving the vestiges of his malice when precluded from displaying the trophies of his victory.

The royal grant of the building which was afterwards converted into the church of St. Pancras, included, as we have said, the plot of ground adjoining ; and this ground became the site of the celebrated monastery of St. Peter and Paul, afterwards known by the name of St. Augustine's. So great a work and conspicuous a memorial of our Saint, where his sacred ashes long reposed, and which remained as a standing monument of his piety and apostolical labours, till, with the other religious houses of England, it fell under the sacrilegious hand of the tyrant, will require more than a passing notice in these pages, and shall accordingly form the subject of a distinct chapter.

⁸ Mark ix. 25, 26.

CHAPTER XIII.

MONASTERY OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

WE have already seen that both at the house in Stablegate, and still more at Ethelbert's palace, St. Augustine and his companions had formed themselves into something of a regular community, and exemplified, as far as circumstances allowed, the practice of the religious life. Indeed, their course in this respect may be said to have been chalked out for them, independently of any private preferences of their own, or of any view which might be taken of the expediency of such a mode of life towards the purposes of their mission. When at Rome, they had been brethren of a monastery; and, so far as they had fallen during their travels into less orderly ways, the change had been attended, as we have seen, with obvious inconveniences. These evils St. Gregory had sought to correct, by giving St. Augustine a more absolute authority over the rest, and so reconstituting the body a strictly religious one. As soon, therefore, as the missionaries were once more settled under the same roof, they returned, quite as a matter of course, to their old habits and arrangements; St. Augustine taking his place among them as their rightful Superior. Thus they carried out the evident intentions, or more probably the express instructions, of the Supreme Pontiff.

Still, their missionary avocations must have left them but little time for the proper and characteristic exercises

of the religious state. From the day of their arrival at Canterbury, they were constantly abroad in the streets and lanes of the city, preaching the Gospel to every creature. In our own time, when the essence of religion is so commonly thought to consist in its social duties alone, the importance even of the monastic institute is apt to be measured principally by the facilities which it offers towards the practice of the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. But it must not be forgotten, that, under the Gospel, the first and great commandment is the love of God, and the love of our brethren but the second. Beneficial then beyond expression as religious communities have been in ameliorating the condition of the poor, and evangelizing the heathen, it is chiefly as they have given scope for contemplation of Divine mysteries, the practice of complete obedience, and the cultivation of the interior life, that they have been bright centres of light, and gushing fountains of health, in the midst of a darkened and diseased world. It has been observed, that some of the principal Gospel types of the Church represent her as a witness, rather than a herald ; a calm and clear and dazzling "light" in a dark place ; a "city set on an hill ;" a beautiful and expansive "tree," which sheds its fragrance around, and draws the lonely under its shelter. These and the like figures give an idea of the calm majesty which gradually gains upon the world, rather than of the zealous ministrations which tell by their immediate effects ; though, of course, among the manifold operations of the One Spirit, these also have a chief place in the Church of Christ.

Such an earthly transcript in epitome of the "Jerusalem which is above" would our holy Archbishop and his royal disciple leave behind them in our fair English land ; even a godly company, who should "wait on the

Lord without distraction," and help our country by their prayers, while others were engaged in more laborious offices of charity.

The more immediate motive, however, which led to the foundation of St. Augustine's monastery seems to have been a desire on the part both of St. Augustine and St. Ethelbert to provide a suitable burial-place for themselves and their successors. This was an object which the incipient and unformed state of the Church in England would render one of no little interest and importance. Very different, indeed, from that over-sensitiveness on the score of posthumous respect, so common in the world, are the precautions which even a Saint might wish to take, with the object of securing his own poor body from the chance of abuse ; since, whether his own, or another's, that body is equally the temple of the Holy Spirit, whose honour is accordingly concerned in its safe disposal and reverential treatment. The same consideration may lead Saints to deprecate insults to their remains after death, which has sometimes led them to acquiesce in the veneration paid them by the world during their lives ; a regard, namely, to God's honour, which they might endanger by a different course.⁹ Moreover, in the last and highest stage of humility, a Christian comes to feel as indifferent about himself, any way, as if he were some other person, and so deals with himself just as he would with what does not belong to him ; and thus the effects of self-conceit, and of self-contempt, will often wear the same appearance in the eyes of a superficial observer. While one Saint, from deep consciousness of personal demerit, studies to be wholly

⁹ See Rodriguez, on Christian Perfection, vol. ii. Tract 3. c. 31. Also a remarkable anecdote to the same point in A. Butler's Life of St. Francis of Assisium.

overlooked and forgotten ; another, no less humble, may manifest so entire an indifference on points which concern himself either way, as even to incur the imputation of vain-glory in the midst of the most abject self-renunciation. It is said (as illustrative of the former view of humility), that St. Francis Borgia positively refused to let his picture be taken when on his death-bed, as accounting the bodily likeness of such a sinner unworthy to be preserved ; whereas others, whose names are no less venerated in the Church, have yielded to the wishes of their friends in such trifles without the least hesitation and misgiving.¹

In the same way, it is possible to conceive Saints acting quite oppositely with respect to the disposal of their own remains after death : one being prepared to encounter the imputation of selfishness and vanity through zeal for God's honour, or rather thinking of this alone ; another being so penetrated with the sense of his own nothingness as to be quite careless of the whereabouts, or disposal, of those ashes, which at all events are to be recollected and re-animated at the Great Day. St. Augustine and St. Ethelbert are instances on the one side, and St. Monica, St. Swithin, St. Francis of Assisium, &c., on the reverse. And yet, that the side of indifference about this matter is not clearly the more religious in itself, seems to be proved by the fact of its having suggested itself as natural to some infidels and scoffers.

Even then did St. Augustine and St. Ethelbert (or rather probably the latter) look to themselves only in their desire of securing an appropriate receptacle for their mortal remains, the reverence claimed by God's tabernacle, even after death, and the charity which seeks to take away the occasions of sin and scandal from

¹ See Life of St. Francis Borgia, in Alban Butler.

the path of others, not to speak of the natural desire which a Catholic feels to repose under the shade of a church, and in the neighbourhood of her prayers and solemn liturgical offices, will sufficiently account for their anxiety on a point which another Saint, or they at another time, might have been content to waive. We may also suppose, that, in desiring honourable sepulture for himself and his successors, St. Augustine had an eye to the dignity of his office, as well as a charitable regard to those instincts which lead even heathens to venerate the dead. Moreover, we must not hastily assume that each Saint was solicitous for himself alone. Was it not, also, that our holy Apostle and right princely king, who had been joined on earth in many a labour of love, had a natural wish to be united in death? Lovely and pleasant were they in their lives, nor would they be in their death divided; each thinking, perhaps, that the fulness of his brother's sanctity might be some sort of protection to his own bareness; but the king being more especially desirous to keep, even in death, by the side of one from whose lips he had derived the words of eternal life, and whose hands had clothed him, as in Christ's stead, with the white garment of innocence.

It is evident, however, that the archbishop and king had other objects at heart besides that of providing themselves a burial-place. They contemplated the erection of a monastery as well as a church. The foundation-stone of the building was laid in the year 598; but so great was its extent, that seven full years passed away before it was fit for consecration. The buildings, when complete, must have occupied a considerable space of ground, as is plain from the boundaries assigned to them in the original deeds of gift.² What portion of the work was finished

² St. Martin's church on the east, Burgate on the south, Drouting-

at once, and what subsequently added, does not clearly appear, except that king Eadbald, Ethelbert's son and successor, built the chapel in honour of St. Mary, into which St. Dunstan was in the habit of retiring at night for private devotion. The monastery was consecrated at Christmas 605, in the presence of the king, queen, their family, and court. The original tutelaries were St. Peter and St. Paul ; but St. Augustine was added by St. Dunstan, who dedicated the monastery anew ; after which it always went by the name of St. Augustine only.

To king Ethelbert, the founder, was allowed the privilege of naming the first abbot ; and the choice fell on Peter, one of the original missionaries. As the chronological tables, according to Mr. Somner, make Peter's appointment coeval with the foundation of the monastery in 598, we cannot doubt that it was the result of a consultation with St. Augustine, by whose advice Ethelbert was guided in all his proceedings. Peter governed the monastery but two years, at the expiration of which he was sent by the king on a mission to France ; and, on his return, was accidentally drowned at Ambleteuse, not far from Boulogne, at which place his body is said to rest in the church of the Blessed Virgin. His two immediate successors were Ruffinianus and Graciosus, who appear to have formed part of the company of priests sent over by the Pope in 601 to reinforce the mission.

This monastery received many rich endowments, and high immunities, from successive kings of England. Ethelbert, the founder, granted it an exemption from taxes, and some peculiar manorial rights ;³ it had like-

street on the west and north. And in another charter still more particularly. See Somner's *Canterbury* and Battely's *Appendix*.

³ Among others, the privilege called *Infangenthef*, or the right of judging a thief caught on the premises.

wise the privilege of a mint, for coinage of money, granted, some say, by Ethelbert, others, by Athelstan, and enjoyed till the reign of Henry II. Ethelbert's successor, Eadbald, besides building St. Mary's chapel,⁴ endowed it with the manor of Northbourne; and among its benefactors were also reckoned, of succeeding kings, Lothaire, Withred, Eadbert, Edmund, Kenewulf, Cuthred, Ethelwolf, Ethelbert, king of the West-Saxons, Canute, St. Edgar, and St. Edward the Confessor.

From the Holy See, the monastery of St. Augustine received other and more important privileges, with many distinguished titles of honour. It was designated the "first-born, and chief mother of monasteries in England," and the "Roman Chapel in England." The archbishop was forbidden to exercise prelatical authority over it; he was to visit it "out of love, as a brother," accounting the abbot of this monastery as a legate of the Holy See, and a fellow-minister of the Gospel of peace. In General Councils, the Abbot of St. Augustine's was placed next to the Abbot of Monte Casino.⁵ No bishop might intrude into the monastery under colour of exercising episcopal functions, but only, with consent of the brethren, to solemnize religious offices. The date of this grant is as early as 611.⁶ The monastery of St. Augustine thus became a special appurtenance of the Holy Apostolic See, its relation to which is commonly recognized in the wording of all formal instruments.⁷

⁴ This chapel was taken down by the abbot Scotland in the time of Lanfranc, and a new and more splendid church erected in its place.—Thorn, col. 1768.

⁵ This was by a grant of Pope Leo, in 1055, and out of special respect to the "purity of the English Church."—Thorn.

⁶ Thorn, Chronic.

⁷ It is styled "*Monasterium, &c. ad Romanam ecclesiam nullo medio pertinens.*"

One of the most interesting benefactions which St. Augustine's monastery received, was that of king Canute, who transferred to it all the endowments of the convent of Minster, in Thanet, including the body of St. Mildred. The history of this event is as follows :—Minster was several times plundered and burned by the Danes, and its sacred inmates put to the sword. After the last disaster, in 1011, it was occupied by a few secular priests only, till at length, in 1027, king Canute made over all its possessions to St. Augustine's, and allowed the monks to remove St. Mildred's body ; a step which was most violently resisted by the priests of Minster, who pursued the monks to the neighbouring river, across which they escaped with their precious spoil.

During the first five hundred years, or, as some say, five hundred and seventy, the Abbots of St. Augustine's received the benediction on their appointment from the Archbishop of Canterbury ; and, in return, made their profession of canonical obedience to him. The direct subjection of the monastery to the Roman See, as in other cases, was designed, and for many centuries operated, not as a warrant for independence, but as a security against usurpation, and a protection to the authority of the Superior. A central power, like that of the Holy See, withdrawn from the risk of local influences, and the temptation to gratuitous interference, yet based at the same time on prerogatives, and guarded by sanctions, than which none can be more calculated to ensure deference and enlist devotion, would seem to be precisely that to which the best interests of the Church require that bodies of so singular and delicate a complexion as the monastic should be directly submitted, rather than to any authority of a more pressing nature. Neither could there be anything like the same guarantee for the

peace and well-being of such bodies in the decisions of an accidental bishop, as in those of the See, which represents, as it were, the collective wisdom of the Church. Yet, how to secure this object without injury to diocesan rights, seems to have been always more or less of a practical difficulty. For many centuries, an excellent understanding seems to have prevailed between the monastery of St. Augustine's and the Archbishops, notwithstanding the very peculiar position which St. Augustine's occupied, as the more immediate dependency of a foreign ecclesiastical power. The Archbishop not only came to the monastery when he pleased, to perform religious offices, but appears to have occasionally taken up his residence within its walls for change of air and occupation ; just as a dignitary might now withdraw for relief from one scene of his duties to another, or from the town into the country. For a long time, too, the monks of Christchurch and St. Augustine's seem to have commonly walked together in religious processions.⁸ At length, in the tenth century, differences sprang up, which seem to have forced the Holy See upon guarding the dignity of her beloved daughter by fresh and very exclusive privileges. In 955, Pope John XIII. was obliged to require the monks of Christchurch to desist from molesting their brethren of St. Augustine's. This was followed up in 1059 by the grant of the mitre and other pontifical badges from Pope Alexander II. to Egelsine, the abbot of St. Augustine's. On the abbot's return to England, however, he was obliged to lay aside these ornaments (the effect of which was to give him absolute episcopal authority), at the in-

⁷ See MSS. in the library of Corpus College, Cambridge, as given in *Monast. Angl.*

stance of the king and archbishop, and was compelled to quit the country. He was succeeded by Scotland, a Norman, who greatly increased the possessions of the monastery, but who is charged by Thorn with making unwarrantable concessions of privilege to Archbishop Lanfranc. Upon his death Lanfranc, according to Thorn, (who was himself an abbot of St. Augustine's and writes, like a partizan,) endeavoured to secure the election of one of his own monks, but was obliged, though reluctantly, to give the benediction to the abbot Wydo, who was more acceptable to the society. At length, in 1124, the archbishop of the time positively refused the benediction to an abbot who had the approbation of the king and of the See of Rome ; the question was debated in a provincial council, in the presence of the king and Cardinal Cremona, the Pope's legate, and, in the end, the Bishop of Chichester was empowered by the Cardinal, in virtue of his authority as representative of the Apostolic See, to administer the benediction under the circumstance of the archbishop's refusal. From that time the abbots seem to have invariably received benediction by a mandate from the Holy See, with the exception, perhaps, of Abbot Silvester in 1152, concerning whom accounts differ, and whose formal profession of obedience to the archiepiscopal see of Canterbury is said to have been preserved in the archives of that church. On the appointment of Abbot Roger in 1173, an ineffectual attempt was made by the archbishop to recover his privilege ; in consequence of which the abbot went to Rome, received the benediction from the holy Father himself, and returned with the mitre and ring, which he forthwith assumed without opposition. Such accounts do not certainly give a comfortable idea of the state of things at the time ; but we

are happily under no temptation to make such subjects a matter of criticism, for which we have neither warrant nor materials.

It now follows to speak of the adverse fortunes of this once famous monastery.

The first disaster which befel it, was the loss of its aboriginal privilege, as the burying-place of the archbishops of Canterbury and kings of England. The kings were not buried here, as would appear, after the archbishopric of Brithwald, towards the close of the 7th century ; and, about half a century later, Archbishop Cuthbert obtained leave to bury within churches, and was himself the first archbishop whose body rested within the cathedral. This act of Archbishop Cuthbert's went far towards producing serious consequences, but they were averted for the time. Twenty years afterwards, Lambrith, abbot of St. Augustine's, came twice to the monastery of Christ-church, to demand the bodies of Archbishop Cuthbert and his successor, Bregwin, in order to their burial, according to ancient usage, in St. Augustine's monastery. He was obliged, however, to return without success ; though, on the latter occasion, he came with an armed force, intending to carry the bodies away in spite of resistance. Thereupon, the brethren of St. Augustine's made an appeal to Rome ; in the mean time, the monks of Christ-church elected Lambrith to the archbishopric, and so the differences were adjusted. However, Lambrith himself was buried, by his own express desire, at St. Augustine's.

The monastery was often exposed to the fury of the Danes. Accounts differ as to the extent of injury which they were able to inflict upon it. If we may believe the chronicler Thorn, who was himself Abbot of St.

Augustine's, their designs were signally and providentially frustrated. He says, that when the Danes destroyed Canterbury, under king Etheldred, in 1011, some of them sacrilegiously entered the monastery of St. Augustine ; and that one of them, more shameless than his companions, approached the tomb of our Apostle, and stole the pall with which the tomb was covered, hiding it under his arm. The account adds, that the pall clung to his flesh, as if it had been glued, and that the thief, conscience-stricken, went to the monks and confessed his fault ; after which the Danes made no farther attacks upon the monastery. It is true that older chroniclers take no notice of this miracle ; but one of them relates, that the abbot of the time was suffered by the Danes to escape, which agrees, so far, with Thorn's account. On the whole, though the miracle has been impugned by some modern authorities, there seems no sufficient ground for rejecting it, while there are, of course, the strongest antecedent reasons in its favour. The Protestant Archbishop Parker considers that St. Augustine's certainly suffered from the Danes ; but he gives no other reason for the opinion, than the great *à priori* improbability, that a monastery which had demeaned itself haughtily towards the archbishops of Canterbury should have been permitted to escape, when other monasteries suffered, and the city of Canterbury itself was laid waste.

In 1168, on the Feast of the Beheading of St. John the Baptist, the monastery was nearly destroyed by fire. Many ancient documents were consumed, and the shrines of St. Augustine and other Saints seriously damaged. Pope Alexander III. confirmed the annexation of the church of Feversham to the monastery with a view to the repairs, and farther assigned to it the churches of Minster and Middleton. In 1271 the abbey suffered

from the violence of another element, though far less, apparently, than the neighbouring city. It was, remarkably enough, on the Feast of the Translation of St. Augustine. It thundered and lightened all night, and the rain came down, and for several days afterwards, in such torrents, that the whole city and surrounding country were well nigh devastated. The water stood high in the court of the monastery, and in the church ; but, though the waters raged and swelled, God was in the midst of her, and she was not removed.

In the reign of Edward I., St. Augustine's, in common with other religious houses, was materially affected by the statute of mortmain ; and from that time forward the annexation of benefices to monasteries, which had already begun, grew much more frequent than before, as a compensation to them for the losses they sustained by the failure of other sources of income. The impropriation of livings to religious houses is said to have arisen in a desire to obviate the risk of disagreements between the clergymen of churches built upon abbey lands, and the monks to whom the lands belonged. But, in process of time, benefices were annexed to monasteries simply as endowments. The effect of such vast acquisitions of territory and revenue could not but have been injurious to the primitive simplicity of monastic institutions, even if not at variance with their original idea. Wealth can hardly pass through the hands without leaving some traces of defilement behind it : the love of influence which riches foster, even where men account themselves not as owners, but as mere trustees of worldly goods ; the consciousness of an almost creative power which they suggest, even under the most favourable circumstances, has shipwrecked many a soul which was comparatively safe against the more vulgar forms of covet-

ousness, the desire of ostentation, or the appetite for mere hoarding. It is true that monastic bodies did not seek the wealth which they received ; and true also, that in no other quarter could large accumulations of property have centred with so much advantage to the world at large ; for monks were proverbially the most considerate of landlords, the most open-hearted and open-handed of hosts, and the most liberal of benefactors to the poor. Yet that, as far as the internal strictness of monastic institutions is concerned, they degenerated from their first purity, in proportion as they came to enjoy "great possessions," seems also undeniable, and what no Catholic need shrink from denying. If it deduct nothing from the perfection of the Church itself, that it is like the net which encloses many kinds of fishes, so does it prove nothing against the perfection of the monastic theory, that even those heavenly safe guards against the spirit of the world which it provides, should themselves have proved at times insufficient against the power of extraordinary temptations.

Even that infidel writer, who, to our shame, has long been suffered to guide the youth of this country in forming their views of English history ; even Hume himself considers it "safest" to confine charges against the ancient monastic bodies of England to the points of "idleness," "ignorance," "superstition," and the like, as distinct from any more glaring crimes ; and has no hesitation in allowing that the suspicion of flagrant irregularities was propagated upon the slenderest evidence, in order to give some colour to the attack which was in contemplation. We might of course go far beyond the view of the case with which this historian permits us to close, and grant the justice of many, or even all of the worst allegations which were made against particular

monasteries, without so much as advancing one single step towards justifying the measures which were actually directed against them. For, first : Ecclesiastical reforms do not properly come within the province of kings and parliaments. We cheerfully render to Cæsar his own, but we claim of him in return not to meddle with the things of God. Secondly : No extent of corruption in the bodies could have warranted the means actually taken to cure it. We must not do evil that good may come. Thirdly : The utmost stretch of charity will not allow the hope that Henry was actuated in his proceedings by any honest desire of correcting abuses. But we are spared from the necessity of concessions, even for argument's sake, which the enemies of the Catholic Faith themselves do not demand of us.

And yet it is perhaps impossible to look into the records of the particular monastery which has led to these remarks, St. Augustine's at Canterbury, without finding reason to suspect the absence, as time went on, of that high and heavenly temper to which such bodies are designed to bear witness, and to which, with whatever drawbacks of earth, their witness has been on the whole so full and conspicuous. Fierce contests for prerogative, jealous resistance of encroachments, the sort of *esprit de corps*, which, without the greatest watchfulness, even religious bodies are in continual danger of substituting for any higher bond of union, and motive to zeal, with all its attendant liabilities to haughtiness, ambition, and uncharitableness—such, judging from Thorn's annals of his own monastery, would seem to have been the temptation to which these societies were peculiarly liable from the time when the riches of the world began to flow into their treasury. One cannot but fear, for instance, that the feelings with which the monks of St. Augustine's, in Thorn's day at

least, regarded their brethren of Christ-church, was rather that which we may conceive some powerful college harbouring towards its rival in the same university, than that of one member of Christ's body towards one of its fellow members. There is ever a risk lest minor spheres of attachment should become ultimate centres of those affections which they are providentially intended not to absorb, but to elicit. Such is the peril against which, so far as we can form an opinion, the brethren of St. Augustine's seem to have been exposed. We have already had occasion to notice the harsh and even bitter terms in which Thorn speaks of Archbishop Lanfranc. It must also be mentioned, with sorrow, that in one place the same chronicler seems to give in, almost exultingly, to current stories against the brethren of Christ-church, as though his own monastery could gain credit by its sister's disgrace. And yet all reports seem to agree in giving Christ-church a high character among the religious establishments of England. To go to a different point, there is certainly something unsatisfactory in the accounts of those sumptuous entertainments which monastic bodies were in the practice of giving, under the plea, and no doubt in the spirit, of hospitality, to the great men of the time. The enthronization of an archbishop was a more legitimate occasion of such splendid festivities than seems always to have existed; yet one cannot but feel that St. Augustine and his monks would have been somewhat startled by the bills of fare in which later abbots appear to have seen nothing but the natural result of a compliance with St. Paul's injunction to hospitality. Several of these documents will be found in Mr. Somner's History of Canterbury; and they indicate, no doubt, a conception of hospitality, which none can deny to be magnificent, but which be-

longs rather to this world than to the angelic life of the cloister. No common man must he have been who, after one of these sumptuous banquets, could settle down at once to his pallet of straw, or his simple meal of fish and eggs ; or who, while the prospect of such excitements was imminent, or their memory fresh, could pursue his meditations with the requisite freedom from disturbance. It is pleasant, however, to turn from these occasional, and, as we may suppose, rare infringements of the usual simplicity of monastic life, to the description of its ordinary routine, as practised in England according to the Benedictine rule. Thus we read, for instance, that "Every monk had his own cell to himself; a place of repose, where he might sleep undisturbed, or give himself freely to prayer and spiritual exercises, without any kind of molestation from any of the rest of the brethren....They had a mat and a hard pillow to lie down upon, and a blanket or rug to keep them warm. They slept in their clothes, girt with girdles, and thereby were always ready to attend their night devotions at the canonical hours. In the dormitory a perpetual silence was enjoined." However, that, despite these goodly provisions, the spirit of Dunstan, Anselm, and Becket was no longer alive in the monasteries of England, at least in the sixteenth century, is but too apparent from the history of their dissolution. Among the heart-sickening details of that monstrous sacrilege, there is nothing sadder to contemplate than the criminal facility with which, almost without exception, the monastic bodies suffered themselves to be threatened, or bribed, into the surrender of an heritage, compared with which, their lives or their liberties should have seemed but as dust in the balance. Thus, every officer of St. Augustine's, from the abbot

downwards, put his hand to a paper, by which the goods of the house, including all the sacred vessels and ornaments of the church, were made over unreservedly and unconditionally into the king's hands. The reader who desires further satisfaction on this painful subject will find in Dugdale two inventories; one, of the church-plate and ornaments, the other, of the vestments, all of which were forthwith transferred into the king's treasury. The vestments were pronounced "unfit for his Majesty's use;" not so, alas! the church-plate. And thus, the "monstrances" and chalices from which the highest Mysteries had been for ages presented to adoring eyes, or dispensed to faithful souls, were snatched from the very altars by profane hands, to promote the purposes of avarice, if not even to serve the uses of luxury. Among the valuables which are comprised in these catalogues, were gilt statues of St. Augustine and St. Ethelbert.

St. Augustine's monastery soon fell into ruins, and the ground on which it stood was let out to the highest bidder. Even in days of which reverence for sacred things and places was so characteristic as those of Charles I. the profanation of this hallowed spot seems to have attracted no public notice; much less, of course, in the ages following. In what way the ground and buildings which still remain upon it (all of them, it is believed, of comparatively modern date) are now portioned out, and for what purposes they are employed, the reader is probably aware, or may at least easily inform himself. There is no need to put the melancholy fact on record; more especially since the days seem happily coming round, when the voice of Catholic England will cry out, not merely for the protection of such holy enclosures from abuse, but for their restoration to the objects for which they were anciently set apart. But it is time to resume the thread of our narrative.

CHAPTER XIV.

MISSION OF ST. MELLITUS AND HIS COMPANIONS.

THE chronology of the epoch to which these pages relate is not a little perplexed ; but the following arrangement of events according to dates, which is taken from Alford, will perhaps, be found sufficiently exact for the purposes of the present sketch. St. Augustine and his brethren arrived in England in the spring of 596, in the midst of the Paschal Alleluias. King Ethelbert and others were admitted into the Church by baptism at Pentecost of the same year ; soon after which St. Augustine repaired to Arles for consecration, which he received on November 17. He returned to England in 598, at the Christmas of which year, or rather early in the January of 599, took place the baptism of the 10,000 converts, mentioned in St. Gregory's letter to Eulogius.¹ In the same year, 599, St. Augustine dispatched messengers to Rome, the very messengers, probably, from whom St. Gregory derived his information on the prosperous state of the English mission.² These

¹ Vid. p. 111. This letter was written in the summer of 599, and speaks of the baptism of the 10,000 converts, as having taken place at Christmas of the current (first) year of the Indiction, which began in September 598.

² St. Bede, however, says that the messengers were sent immediately (continuo) on St. Augustine's return from Arles ; but this,

were Laurence, a presbyter, and St. Augustine's successor in the See of Canterbury; and Peter, a monk, afterwards the first abbot of St. Augustine's monastery. The objects of this embassy were, among others, first, to report the progress of the mission, secondly, to ask for additional missionaries, and, thirdly, to obtain the judgment of the Apostolic See upon certain difficult questions to which the anomalous circumstances of the Church in England had given, or were likely to give, occasion. These questions, with their several answers, shall form the subject of the next chapter.

The delegates continued two full years at Rome; and at length, in 601, came back to England with a reinforcement of twelve missionaries, the chief of whom were, Mellitus, Justus, Paulinus, and Ruffinianus. Of these, the three former were afterwards raised to the Episcopate, and attained the glories of sanctity. St. Mellitus was the first Bishop of London, St. Justus the first Bishop of Rochester, and St. Paulinus the first Archbishop of York. Of the fourth, Ruffinianus, we know only that he was one of the earlier among the Abbots of St. Augustine's.

The new missionaries were charged, like their predecessors, with letters commendatory to the prelates and sovereign princes of that portion of France through which they were to pass. To each of the Bishops of Toulon, Marseilles, Châlons, Metz, Paris, Rouen, and Angers, St. Gregory wrote as follows :

perhaps, refers to the intention of sending them, or the preparation for their journey. They certainly did not return to England till 601, and it does not appear why they should have remained at Rome three years, or even more, if we follow those who consider that the baptism of the 10,000 took place in 597, and that St. Augustine had then returned from Arles.

GREGORY TO MENNAS OF TOULON, SERENUS OF MARSEILLES, LUPUS OF CHALONS, AIGULFUS OF METZ, SIMPLICIUS OF PARIS, MELANTIUS OF ROUEN, AND LICINIUS,³ BISHOPS OF THE FRANKS. *A copy to each.*

“ALTHOUGH the charge of your office is a warning to your Fraternity that you ought with all your power to give your assistance to religious men, particularly where they are labouring in the cause of souls ; yet it is not useless for your anxiety to be urged by the address of our letters ; for as a fire is increased by the wind, so the zeal of an honest mind is promoted by exhortation. Since, then, by the grace of our Redeemer, so great a multitude of the English nation is converted to the Christian Faith, that our most reverend common brother and fellow-bishop Augustine, declares that those who are with him cannot sufficiently carry out this work in every different place, we have provided for sending to him some monks with our much beloved and common sons, Laurence, the Presbyter, and Mellitus, Abbot. And, therefore, I beg your Fraternity to shew them such love as is becoming, and readily to aid them wherever it may be necessary ; that so by your assistance they may have no reason for delay, and may receive joy and refreshment by means of the comfort which you will give them, and that you by shewing them kindness, may render yourselves partners in the cause, for which they are engaged.”⁴

With this was joined a letter to Clotaire, who reigned over the provinces of Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy.

³ The see of Licinius was Angers.

⁴ St. Greg. Ep. xi. 58.

GREGORY TO CLOTAIRE, KING OF THE FRANKS.⁵

“AMIDST the many cares and anxieties which you undergo in governing the nations which are subject to you, that you should aid those who are labouring in the cause of God, is a subject of singular praise, and will bring upon you a high reward. And since by your previous good acts you have proved yourself such that we may presume still better things of you, we are most gladly urged to beg of you what will redound to your recompense. Some of those who went with our most reverend brother and fellow-bishop, Augustine, to the English nation, told us on their return, with what charity your Excellence had refreshed our said brother during his stay with you, and how you had succoured and assisted him on his way. But since their works are ever pleasing to our God, who do not turn back from the good which they have begun, we greet you with our fatherly affection, and beg of you to consider the Monks, the bearers of these presents, whom we have sent to our before-mentioned brother, together with our well-beloved sons, Laurence, Presbyter, and Mellitus, Abbot, as especially commended to you. And whatever kindness you shewed before to him, bestow more abundantly upon them also, and thus increase the amount of your praise ;

⁵ Clotaire, the younger, was son of Chilperic, grandson of Clotaire the elder, and great-grandson of Clovis. He became king at four years of age, on the murder of his father. He was first cousin of Childebert, son and successor of Sigebert, and by him and his sons Theoderic and Theodebert (of whom before) was attacked, defeated, and stripped of a great part of his dominions ; so that for a long time he reigned in a part of Neustria alone. But after the death of Theoderic and Theodebert and their grandmother, Brunehault, he gained a great victory over their sons and became monarch of the three provinces of Austrasia, Neustria, and Burgundy.

that so, whilst by the help of your assistance they accomplish the journey upon which they have entered, Almighty God may recompense you for your good deeds, being your Guardian in prosperity and your Help under adversity.”⁶

St. Gregory wrote also to Brunehault, the queen-regent, thanking her for her hospitable reception of St. Augustine on his passage through France four years before, and craving the like protection in behalf of the new missionaries.

GREGORY TO BRUNEAULT, QUEEN OF THE FRANKS.

“WE render thanks to Almighty God, who, amongst other gifts of His loving kindness which He has bestowed upon your Excellence, has so filled you with love for the Christian religion, that whatever you know tends to the good of souls and propagation of the Faith, you cease not to labour therein with devout and pious zeal. But with what kindness and aid your Excellence assisted our most reverend brother and fellow-bishop, Augustine, on his way to the English nation, report was not silent, and afterwards some monks on their return from him to us, related the matter in detail. This Christian conduct of yours may be a subject of wonder to others, who are, as yet, less familiarly acquainted with your good deeds; but to us, who are already familiar with them by experience, they are not so much a subject of wonder as of joy, because, hereby, in all that you bestow on others you assist yourself. What great miracles then our Redeemer has wrought in the conversion of the above-mentioned nation, is already known to your Excellence⁷.

⁶ St. Greg. Ep. xi. 61.

⁷ St. Augustine may have brought the tidings to Queen Brunehault, at Chalons, on his way to Arles for his consecration.

And this ought to be a subject of great joy to you, since the comfort which you have afforded claims for you a share in the event, inasmuch as it was by your assistance, after God, that the word of preaching was then made known. For whoever assists another's good work, makes it his own. But that the fruit of your reward may be more and more abundant, we beg of you kindly to extend the aid of your countenance to the monks, the bearers of these presents, whom we have sent with our well-beloved sons Laurence, the Presbyter, and Mellitus, Abbot, to our before-mentioned most reverend brother and fellow-bishop, (since he tells us that those who are with him cannot sufficiently assist him,) and that you would deign to aid them in every thing: that so, whilst the good beginnings of your Excellence are followed by still better, and they are prevented meeting with any delay or difficulty, you may move the mercy of our God towards yourself and your grandsons, who are so dear to us, in proportion as you shew yourself merciful for the love of Him in cases of this kind^s.

With these letters were included others, to Desiderius, Virgilius, Ætherius, and Arigius, Bishops, respectively, of Vienne, Arles, Lyons, and Gap in Dauphiny. The Pope wrote also to the two young sovereign princes, Theoderic and Theodebert, in nearly the same terms as to their grandmother, queen Brunehault.

No particulars of the journey have come down to us; it lay through the same line of country which, four years before, had been illustrated by the progress of St. Augustine himself, and the sees were, generally, filled by the same occupants as on the previous occasion. Laurence and Peter, too, who were of the party, had

^s St. Greg. Ep. xi. 62.

been in the number of St. Augustine's companions. How many thoughts of sweet remembrance; how many topics of edifying speech must the *admonitus locorum* have awakened! "Here we prayed for England; here we almost fainted on our way; here our venerable father cheered our drooping spirits by this exhortation; here he struck awe among the beholders by that miracle." What pleasant recognitions, too, and mutual good offices, and interchanges of congratulation between the hospitable prelates and the representatives of the original mission! what questions about England, heathen and Christian, what rejoicing in its blessedness, what anticipation of its prospects!

By the hands of the new missionaries, the holy father sent all things necessary for the more solemn and edifying celebration of Divine worship; such as, "sacred vessels, altar-plate, and altar-coverings, ornaments for the Church, priestly and other clerical vestments, many relics of apostles and martyrs," (among which are believed to have been some of St. Peter and St. Paul, the tutelaries of the new metropolitan Church), "and a quantity of books⁹."

When Christianity was first introduced, it made its way without the advantage of those exterior embellishments which came with its advance. It "travelled in the greatness" of its "own strength." First, it vanquished the world, in part, with weapons of its own celestial temper; next, it spoiled the vanquished of their arms, theirs by long possession indeed, yet not of inherent right; and thus, having "made the creature its weapon," it proceeded on its march of conquest. Was it not indeed thus? Noble architecture, impressive pictures, thrilling music, glorious ceremonial; these were of later

⁹ S. Bede, H. E. i. 29.

growth and less native origin. The earliest Christian Church was an attic, the first baptisteries, way-side pools, St. Paul and St. Silvanus sang their nocturns in a dungeon. And yét, withal, "mightily grew the word of God, and prevailed," till, at length, the Church awoke, like her Lord before her, from the tomb, and put on her strength, yea, "put on her beautiful garments." The order of her triumphs was the same here in England as in the world at large. She won her way by miracle, and kept her ground through sanctity, the outward and inward tokens of the Holy Ghost. Not until her foundations were laid deep and broad, did the great Master Builder see fit to rear the august superstructure and elaborate the curious details. Not less acceptable was the offering of the Adorable Sacrifice in St. Martin's or St. Pancras, though there were, as yet, no long-drawn aisles to give scope for stately processions, nor spacious courts to receive and circulate the undulations of holy psalmody—than, at a later time, when à Becket sang Mass, with all the means and appliances of solemn worship, in Lanfranc's goodly pile. Not, of course, that the infant Church of Saxon England was ever, even in its rudest state, any more than the Church of the Apostles, neglectful of those external proprieties which are as the beaming features of the Church's inward soul, significant of her beauty, and radiant with love. Liturgical writers have taught that the majestic forms and delicate proprieties of ceremonial were observed, as far as circumstances permitted, even in the days of the Apostles; and that ere, as yet, the world suffered the Church to do what she would have wished, the Church was yet fain, with loving Magdalene, to do what she could. And the solemn processions, the sacred insignia, the entoned litanies, the illuminated sanctuaries, of which we read as concomitant

with the earliest steps of the Church on its revival in our own country, are indicative, surely, of the like pious disposition. Still the general assertion remains untouched, that the Church gained hearts and consciences on her side before she disclosed herself in all the attributes of outward pomp and beauty; and this, both in the world at large, and specially in England. Let not such lessons be thrown away on those among ourselves to whom may seem to have been allotted a work not wholly dissimilar from that of our first missionaries. Let us not begin at the wrong end, by studying the forms of the sanctuary before the science of the Saints; but rather let us understand that outward beauty is the development of true piety, not its compensation. On the other hand, let us not be led by any fear of one extreme, to even so much as an apparent closing with its opposite, which, if men would but bear in mind the true nature and right place of religious ceremonial, must be accounted hardly a less pernicious one. That innate sense of the graceful and majestic, for why is it implanted by God, but that it may exercise itself upon His works, whether of nature or of grace? Those precious offerings of earth, those marvellous ingenuities of man, shall they be exhausted on this sorry world, to perish "with the using," yea, (must it not be said?) and too often "with the users"? That were surely to feign, with heretics of old, that creation is the work of some spirit of evil, radically and hopelessly corrupt, not the gift of our gracious Lord, which He made "very good," and which the Holy Ghost has re-made, in His Church, more glorious than at the first, even filling the whole world with His illustrious and Life-giving Presence, and so "making new the face of the earth."

CHAPTER XV.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON THE ENGLISH CHURCH.

ONE of the first objects of St. Augustine, upon his return from Arles, was, as stated in the former Chapter, to obtain from Rome a series of authoritative directions for the ordering of the English Church.

A modern objector has ventured upon ascribing this desire to a discreditable want of learning ; yet, not to speak of St. Gregory's own testimony to his high qualifications in this respect,¹ nothing, surely, could be more natural than that a solitary bishop, in a distant land, and that a land but recently in any degree, and still but in part, reclaimed from the enormities of a dark and cruel superstition, should seek a solution of the many ecclesiastical problems to which the anomalies of the case would continually give rise ; and should apply for it to the quarter to which all the feelings of duty prompted him, and all the sanctions of precedent required him, to look up with reverence and submission. Some of the following inquiries will be seen to refer directly to the case of an infant Church, others to local peculiarities of the Church in England, and all of them to bear upon subjects more or less incidental to St. Augustine's peculiar position.

The first Question submitted by the new Archbishop to the judgment of the Holy See, related to the manner

¹ Vid. *infra*, p. 174.

in which bishops should live among their clergy, and the several objects for which, and proportions in which, the offerings of the faithful are to be distributed.

The former part of this Question St. Gregory answers by reminding the Archbishop of the different Scripture passages bearing upon the conduct and deportment of those whom God sets over His heritage ; and more especially of the instructions to bishops contained in the Epistle of St. Paul to Timothy. He farther recommends under the actual circumstances of the English Church, that the bishops and clergy should live together, as in the primitive age ; partaking of their meals at the same table, and throwing their property into a common stock. In other words, they were to conform precisely to the rules of monastic discipline ; “ in which ” says St. Gregory to the Archbishop, “ your Fraternity is well versed.”² So it is, indeed, that the words in the Acts of the Apostles which depict the life and conversation of the first Christians might be taken for the description of a monastic society. “ The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul ; neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common.”³ It is sometimes asked, where, in later times, has this primitive type been fulfilled ? And certain separatists have tried, with more zeal than knowledge, to restore the life of the earliest Christians by abrupt, violent, and, therefore, unlawful methods. But, in truth, the question of the one class has been practically answered, and the attempts of the other anticipated and superseded, by an institution which has subsisted in regular form throughout all ages of the Church.

² Cf. also S. Greg. ep. xi. 66.

³ Acts iv. 32.

To return to St. Gregory's Reply. With respect to the distribution of offerings, he writes: "It is the practice of the Apostolic See to deliver instructions to bishops at their consecration, to the effect, that every payment which accrues is to be divided into four portions; one, for the Bishop and his household, towards the discharge of the duties of hospitality and reception; one for the clergy; the third for the poor; the fourth for the repair of the fabrics."⁴

As to such "clerks, not being in holy orders, as had not the gift of continence,"⁵ the Pope determines that "they should be allowed to marry, and receive their stipend at their own houses." For "of the primitive Christians" he adds, "it is recorded, that 'distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.'"⁶ With respect to their stipend, he recommends "care and circumspection," and that they should be "bound by ecclesiastical rule to observe a strict conversation, and pay attention to divine psalmody, keeping their hearts and tongues and bodies, by God's help, clear of all irregularity."⁷

⁴ Vide other instances in which this quadripartite division is enjoined in St. Gregory's Epistles, viz. lib. iv. ep. 11, lib. v. ep. 44, lib. viii. ep. 7, lib. xiii. ep. 44.

⁵ In the Benedictine edition of St. Gregory's works, this forms the answer to a separate Question, the second in order, viz. "An clerici continere non valentes, possint contrahere, et, si contraxerint, an debeant ad seculum redire?"

⁶ Acts iv. 35.

⁷ Bishops, Priests, and Deacons were obliged to a single life from very early times. (Vid. a full note to the Oxford translation of Fleury's Ecclesiastical History, Book xix. c. 22.) Pope St. Leo, (A.D. 446) extended the rule to sub-deacons, who, however, in Sicily, were not included till the time of St. Gregory the Great, A.D. 590. (Lib. i. ep. 44.) Those whom St. Gregory here allows to marry are Clerici, i. e.

To those who were to live in community, he judges it less needful to speak of "equitable distribution, and the duties of hospitality and mercy, seeing it is plain, that all superfluity is to be expended in the service of religion and godliness, according to our Lord's precept, 'Give alms of such things as ye have, and, behold, all things are clean unto you.'⁸

The Second, or, as it is in some copies, the Third, Question, bore upon the ritual of religion. St. Augustine during his stay in France, had the opportunity of becoming acquainted with the Gallican Missal, which differed from the Roman in several respects. It had been set in order by St. Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, in the 4th, and Sidonius, Bishop of Auvergne, and Musæus, in the 5th centuries, and continued distinct from the Roman till the time of Charlemagne.⁹ St. Augustine was impressed by the fact of this discrepancy of rite in nations which were members of the same Church, and submitted his difficulties in the following words :

"Seeing that there is but one Faith, why do the customs of Churches vary, so that one Order for the Mass prevails in the Roman Church, and another in that of France?"¹

St. Gregory's reply was as follows :

"Your Fraternity is familiar with the practice of the Roman Church, in which, as you well know, you were brought up. But if you have found what may be more acceptable to Almighty God, whether in the Roman, French, or any other Church, I would have you carefully select and introduce, as by special ap-

the "clerks," of the lower orders, including, probably, the sub-deacons. Vid. Ducange, Glossar. "Clericus."

⁸ St. Luke xi. 41.

⁹ Vid. Palmer's Orig. Liturg.

¹ This is the reading of the Benedictine editors.

pointment, into the English Church (which is as yet but young in the Faith) what you have thus been able to cull from many Churches. Things are not to be loved for the places where they are found, but rather places for the good things which they possess. Choose, therefore, from each Church whatever is devout, religious, and right; form them into a single collection, and lodge them in the minds of the English, for the use of the Church."

It does not appear that the Archbishop availed himself of this permission. The original service-books of the Anglo-Saxon Church were, probably, a mere transcript of the Sacramentary of St. Gregory, into which local variations were by degrees introduced under the sanction of the bishops of certain dioceses. Hence, the well-known "Uses" of York, Sarum, Hereford, Bangor, Lincoln, Aberdeen, &c. After the Council of Trent, in the Pontificate of Pius V., an uniform rite was established in the Churches of the Roman obedience, excepting such as could plead the use of other forms of service for upwards of two centuries. England, had it come under the operation of that decree, would have formed one of the exceptions.

St. Augustine's next question was as follows: "What punishment is to be inflicted on one who commits theft in a Church?"

St. Gregory, in reply, advises a distinction of punishment according to the circumstances of the culprit. In the case of wealthier offenders, he proposes the confiscation of goods; the poorer, he would have punished with stripes, more or fewer, according to the amount of guilt. But where severer measures are adopted, all, he says, should be done in charity, nought in anger; since it is the object of punishments not to satisfy the vindictive feelings of the injured party, but to correct the offender,

and anticipate the sufferings of another life. "For we ought," adds the holy Pontiff, "to exercise discipline towards the faithful, as good fathers are wont to do towards their children after the flesh, whom they beat for their faults, and yet design to appoint their heirs at the very time when they are thus painfully chastising them ; thus reserving their goods for those whom they seem to be chiding in anger. This charity, then, should be ever observed, and should regulate the measure of correction, that so the mind may do nothing whatever without the rule of reason. You shall add, also, how they are to make restoration for what they have stolen out of a church : but God forbid that the Church should receive with increase what she appears to lose of earthly possessions, or seek to make a gain of the things of vanity."

The next questions of the Archbishop refer to the case of marriage between kindred and connections. First, as to the marriage of two brothers with two sisters not nearly related to them.

"Against this," answers the Pope, "there is no law of God, and we allow it by all means."

Secondly, "Within what degree of affinity may the faithful contract marriages with relatives? And may marriages be lawfully undertaken with a step-mother, or with a brother's wife?"

Upon the former point, St. Gregory replies with a special reference to the circumstances of the English Church. The prohibition, anciently extended to the seventh degree of relationship ; but at the Lateran Council, under Pope Innocent III., it was reduced to the fourth. In consideration, however, of the peculiar circumstances which suggested a reason for the utmost indulgence towards England, St. Gregory so far relaxes the rule as to

sanction marriages between third cousins.² His answer is as follows :

“There is a merely political enactment of the Roman state, which allows the marriage of first cousins, whether the son and daughter of brother and sister, or of two own brothers, or of two own sisters. But we have learned by experience, that children never thrive which are the issue of such alliances ; and in the case of a brother’s wife, the Law of God forbids it.³ It follows, therefore, that the faithful should not be allowed to marry within the third or fourth degree of consanguinity ; within the second, as I have said, they ought by all means to abstain. But to marry a father’s second wife is a great crime ; for it is expressly written in the Law, ‘*Turpitudinem patris tui non discooperies.*’⁴ But since it is written, ‘they shall be one flesh ;’⁵ whoever shall presume to break this law in the case of a father’s wife, has, in fact, broken it in the case of a father. It is also forbidden that a person marry a brother’s wife, since, by her former marriage, she had become one flesh with his brother. And in this cause it was that John Baptist was beheaded, and perfected by holy martyrdom ; for, though he was not required to deny Christ, yet for confessing Christ was he slain. For, since our Lord Jesus Christ had said, ‘I am the Truth,’ and it was for the Truth that St. John was put to death, he did truly shed his blood for Christ.

“Since, however, many among the English are reported to have already contracted such wicked marriages, let them be admonished, on coming to the Faith, to keep continence, and to recognize this as a grievous sin. Let them fear the terrible judgment of God, lest, for their

² *Quartâ progenie conjuncti.*

⁴ *Ib. xviii. 7.*

³ *Lev. xviii. 16.*

⁵ *Gen. ii. 24.*

carnal affection, they incur the torments of eternal punishment. They are not, however, on this account to be deprived of the communion of our Lord's sacred Body and Blood ; that sins committed by them, through ignorance, before the laver of Baptism, may not seem to be visited upon them. For, at such times, some things Holy Church corrects with zeal, some she tolerates in gentleness, some she winks at in tenderness, and so bears and dissembles, as frequently by this means to check the evil which she opposes. But let all who come to the Faith be admonished not to venture upon committing any such sin. And should any (after admonition) be guilty of so doing, let them be deprived of the communion of our Lord's Body and Blood ; for, as in the case of those who have acted through ignorance, the fault is entitled to a certain amount of indulgence, so is it to be strongly followed up with punishment in the case of those who are not afraid to sin with knowledge."

It is not quite clear whether St. Gregory's permission of marriages between third cousins were prospective as well as retrospective ; possibly it may have gone merely against the separation of those who, being thus nearly related, were united in marriage at the time when they joined the Church. Even this amount of indulgence, however, gave umbrage in some parts of Christendom, as we learn from a letter of Felix, bishop of Messina, who, upon hearing of the allowance granted to the English Church, addressed a letter of respectful and affectionate expostulation to the Roman Pontiff. The language, indeed, of profound reverence and submission with which the holy Bishop introduces and tempers his objections, is a token no less of the deference paid in early times to the judgment of the Apostolic See, than of the high

estimation in which the reigning Pontiff was held by the contemporary prelates of Christendom. The letter is so interesting, indeed, in many points of view, that although but in part only applicable to the immediate subject, it has been thought well to give it almost entire.

FELIX, BISHOP OF MESSINA, TO GREGORY.

“ To the most blessed and honoured Lord, and holy Father, Gregory, Pope, Felix, of his love towards your health and holiness, sends greeting.

“ The laws of your blessed health and holiness are manifest before God. While all the earth is filled with your apostolic lessons and exhortations, and diligent culture of the true Faith, the orthodox Church of Christ founded by institution of the Apostles, and most firmly strengthened by our fathers in the Faith, is built up by the instructions of your divine eloquence, and the power of your hortatory admonitions. To which Church all the blessed Apostles, endued with an equal share of honour and authority, converted the multitude of the people, bringing them over, piously and holily, from darkness to light, from depths of ignorance to the true Faith, from death to life, even those whom Divine grace foreknew and predestinated, by means of their wholesome precepts and admonitions. The glorious merits of which holy Apostles are followed by your Paternity, who, perfectly treading in the steps of their examples, adorns the Church of God by the integrity of your life and holiness of your deeds, and, in the full vigour of sound faith and Christian conversation, with pontifical zeal, unceasingly labours to perform and carry out those precepts, well-pleasing to God, which in teaching you

inculcate ; thus truly observing the rule of the Divine law, which says, in the words of the Apostle, ‘ Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.’⁶

“ In the midst of such reflections, news was brought us by persons from Rome, that you had written to Augustine, our comrade, afterwards, by commission of your venerable Holiness, consecrated Bishop of the English nation, and directed thither, and through him to the English, (who, we are informed, have been by you converted to the Faith,) forbidding the separation of married persons related to one another in the fourth degree of affinity. In the parts where I was for a long time brought up and educated with you, no such practice existed, nor have I ever met with it in the decrees of any among your predecessors, or in the institutes, whether general, or special, of our fathers ; nor did I ever before hear of any among the Church’s wisest doctors granting such an indulgence. On the contrary, I have always learned from your pious predecessors, and the other holy fathers, gathered together as well in the Council of Nicæa, as in other holy councils, that continence should be maintained between relatives up to the seventh degree, and I have ever found this law studiously kept by men who live holily and in the fear of God. . . .

“ There are certain churches in our province whose consecration is doubtful ; it cannot be ascertained, either through length of time or the carelessness of those who have had charge of them, whether or not they were dedicated by bishops. On all which points we implore advice from your Holiness, and the authority of your

⁶ Rom. ii. 13.

Holy See. And again, whether the instructions which, as we say, we understand to have been given to our fellow-bishop Augustine, and to the English nation, were meant specially for them or generally for all. Upon this and the other aforesaid matters, we desire full and satisfactory information. Far be it from us to signify to you the result of our study and experience in the way of reproof; all we desire is, to know what practice we are in reason, as in faith, to adopt in all these several particulars. And inasmuch as no small stir has been occasioned by these tidings, we wish to learn from you as from the supreme head, what replies we are to give our brethren and fellow-bishops, so that we may not continue in doubt upon these subjects, and that this complaint may not now and hereafter be rife among ourselves and others; nor the report of you, which was ever of the best, be torn to pieces, or supplanted by calumnies, and your name (which God forbid!) be evil spoken of in time to come. As for ourselves, we maintain, by God's grace, all right things in all lowliness of heart; with you we are united in the one bond of charity; and while, as becomes faithful disciples, we vindicate your religious practice in all things, we look to you for guidance in the right course. For we are aware that the prelates of the Holy See, first the Apostles, and afterwards their successors, have ever constituted you guardian of the Catholic Church, especially of bishops, who from their habits of contemplation, and the watch they keep over Christ's flock, are called His Eyes; and have given it you in charge to meditate on subjects relating to our faith and practice, as it is written, 'Blessed is the man . . . who shall meditate on the law of the Lord day and night.'⁷ And this medi-

⁷ Vid. Ps. i. 2.

tation is not only witnessed by the eyes of readers in the visible shape of letters, but is known to be immovably implanted in your conscience, through the grace of Christ, that richly abounds in you. For at no time is the holy law of Christ our Lord withdrawn from your heart, according to the words of the prophet in the book of Psalms, 'The mouth of the righteous is exercised in wisdom, and his tongue will be talking of judgment.' 'The law of his God is in his heart,'⁸ written among your secrets, not with ink, but with the Spirit of the Living God ; and therefore not on tables of stone, but on the tables of the heart. Let all our darkness, then, be dispelled, we entreat, by the timely wisdom of your replies and assistance, that the Day-star may everywhere, through you, most holy Father, beam upon us, and your dogmatic decision cause universal joy ; since the glorious fathers of Holy Church are known to proclaim their own godly determinations, to the strengthening of the inheritance of eternal life. In fine, we pray that the Lord may preserve you, holy Father of fathers, in safety, and acceptance with Him, for ever, and may hear your prayers for us. Amen."

St. Gregory replied in a letter of considerable length, from which the following is extracted :—

"To the most reverend our brother Felix, Bishop, Gregory, servant of the servants of God.

"Our Head, who is Christ, would have us His members to this end, that of His bounteous love and our faith in Him, He might make us one body in Himself, and that we might so cleave to it, that, as without Him we can be nothing, we may, through Him, be all that we are said to be. From this citadel of our Head let

⁸ Ps. xxxvii. 31. [xxxvi. 30, 31, Vulg.]

nothing tear us, lest, declining to be His member, we be forsaken of Him, and wither away as cast-off shoots of the Vine. To the end, then, we may deserve to be the dwelling-place of our Redeemer, let us, with all the earnestness of our minds, abide in His love ; for Himself saith, ‘If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and We will come unto him, and make Our abode with him.’⁹ Now your Affection, dearest brother, has required us to give, by authority of the Apostolic See, an answer to your inquiries. And this we would hasten to do, not at length, but concisely, by reason of certain engagements which have come upon us through the hindrances arising from our sins. To your studious labours, however, we commit this matter, that you may follow up the investigation of it, and discover what light other institutions of the fathers throw upon it. For it is impossible that a mind harassed and oppressed by burdens and engagements, can pursue such inquiries with the same advantage, and speak of the matter with the same freedom, as one which is full of glee, and quite at ease. These apologies we do not offer with the view of refusing your Holiness the necessary information which you desire, but to the end you may investigate the more extensively, on account of the very limited satisfaction we afford you

“As to my communications with Augustine, bishop of the English nation, and, as you remember, your disciple, on the subject of marriage between relatives, you must understand, that I wrote specially for himself and the English nation, which has been lately brought over to the Faith, to the end it might not fall back

⁹ John xiv. 23.

from the good it had attained, through dread of an over-severe discipline, and not generally for the rest of Christendom. And accordingly, the whole city of Rome is my witness, that I did not give these instructions to them with the intention, that when firmly rooted in the Faith, those who were found to have married within nearer than the prescribed degrees of consanguinity should not be separated ; or, again, that those should be united who might chance to stand towards each other in any closer relation than that of sixth cousin ; but those who are still novices it is often fitting to warn, in the first place, both by teaching and example, against what is plainly unlawful, and at once, as a dictate of reason, and an act of faith, to keep out of sight what they will afterwards have to do in such matters. For, after the Apostle, who says, ‘I have fed you with milk, and not with meat,’¹ we have granted this indulgence to them alone, (as we have said above,) and not to their posterity, in order that the good which has not yet taken firm root, may not be plucked up, but may be strengthened, according to its beginning, and kept safely, till it arrives at perfection. Verily, if herein we have done otherwise than was meet, you must not ascribe the fault to laxity, but to excess of commiseration : and that such it is, I call God to witness, who knoweth the thoughts of all men, to whose eyes all things are naked and open. For, were I to destroy what our predecessors have established, I should be found not a builder up, but a caster down, according to the witness of the Truth, who says, ‘A kingdom divided against itself shall not stand,’ and every science and law which is at variance with itself must come to nought. Needful, then,

¹ 1 Cor. iii. 2.

is it we should all hold fast, with one accord, the institutions of our holy fathers, doing nought by contention, but, being of one mind for every object of pure devotion, let us, with the help of God, be obedient to all Divine and Apostolical appointments."

What English heart but must be moved by such touching proofs of the holy Father's tenderness towards our country? What a pledge to us these loving expressions of his still active watchfulness over the people of his care! And then he breaks forth into the following strain of affectionate rapture:—

"O how good a thing is charity, which mutually reveals the hearts of the absent, through the power of imagination, of the present, through the exercise of affection! which is the healer of divisions, the composer of disorders, the harmonizer of inequalities, the finisher of imperfect works! How truly does the model of preachers call thee the 'bond of perfectness!' since the other virtues are the parents of perfection, but Charity so knits them together, that from the mind of one who loves they can by no means be dissevered.

"In this judgment it was that I tempered my instructions by the law of charity, and gave, not a precept, but a counsel; nor was it a rule in this case which I delivered for the observance of posterity, but of two dangers I pointed out that for avoidance which was the easier to avoid."

St. Augustine's next question was suggested by the difficulty of finding the proper number of bishops to act at the consecration of one of their order. The Councils of Nicæa and Arles, and the Third of Carthage, made the presence of three essential; though the Apostolical Canons recognize consecrations with but one assistant prelate. But, in cases of extremity, consecra-

tion by a single bishop had been admitted, as in the instance of Siderius, Bishop of Palæbisca, and afterwards Metropolitan of Ptolemais, whose consecration was recognized and confirmed by St. Athanasius. On the strength of this and other precedents, St. Gregory dispensed with the rule in the case of the first bishop consecrated in the English Church. At the same time he required the Archbishop of Canterbury to make provision against the recurrence of such an anomaly. The question and answer are as follows.

Question. "If, owing to the length of distance, bishops cannot easily meet, ought one to be consecrated without the presence of others?"

Answer. "In the English Church, in which you are as yet the only bishop, you cannot ordain a bishop otherwise than without the presence of others; for when do bishops come from France to be present at the consecration of one of their order? But we would have your Fraternity take care that the bishops whom you ordain are placed at the shortest possible distance from one another, that so there may be no hindrance to the meeting, at an episcopal consecration, of other pastors whose presence is so important. When, then, by the Divine help, you have thus ordained bishops in places near to each other, consecrations should by no means be allowed at which three or four other bishops are not present. For we may take example even from carnal matters, to direct us in a wise and careful disposition of spiritual things. Thus it is, that in the world, married persons are summoned to marriages, in order that those who have gone before in the path of wedlock may be united in the joy of the actual union. Why, then, in this spiritual ordination, also, in which, by the sacred ministry, man is allied with God, should not those

meet together who have been before ordained bishops, and are thus able to take part in the joy, or pour forth united prayers to Almighty God for their brother's safety?"

It is observable that, while St. Gregory speaks of the difficulties in the way of obtaining the assistance of the *Gallican* bishops, he makes no allusion whatever to the bishops of Britain at that time settled in Wales. The fact seems to have been, that since the first establishment of the Saxons in England, all intercourse with the ancient British Church had ceased.

St. Augustine's Seventh Question relates to intercourse with the bishops of Gaul and Britain. The concluding sentence of St. Gregory's Answer must be noted, as containing the origin of the power which, at a somewhat later period, St. Augustine will be found to claim over the prelates of the ancient British Church.

"As to the bishops of Gaul," answers the Pope, "we grant you no authority among them; since, from the time of my remote predecessors, the Bishop of Arles has received the Pall, and there is no call whatever upon us to deprive him of a right once entrusted to him. Should it so happen, then, that your Fraternity were to pass over to the province of Gaul, it would be your part to confer with the Bishop of Arles, so that any vices which may prevail among the other bishops may be corrected; and that, should he have at all relaxed in vigour of discipline, his zeal may be rekindled by the presence of your Fraternity. We have, accordingly, written to him to urge, that during the stay of your Holiness in Gaul, he should give all heed to your suggestions, and interpose a check as to any point of episcopal conduct which may contravene the laws of our Creator. With regard to yourself, however, it is

not competent to you to pass sentence upon the bishops of Gaul, situated as they are beyond the limits of your jurisdiction. Still we enjoin you, by persuasion and kindness, and the display of exemplary conduct, to reform the vicious where you can, according to the pattern of sanctity: for it is written in the Law, "When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbours standing corn."² The sickle of judgment you may not move unto the harvest-field which you see to be committed to another. But the Lord's corn you may and must separate from the chaff of vices which deteriorate it, and by admonitions and persuasions, and a process, as it were, of gentle mastication, convert it into the Lord's Body. But, with respect to acts of authority, you will communicate with the aforesaid Bishop of Arles, that nothing may be neglected which is required by the institution of the fathers.

"All the bishops of Britain, however, we commit to your Fraternity, to instruct the unlearned, strengthen the weak by exhortation, and correct the perverse by authority."

Here some MSS. introduce a Question and Answer upon the relics of St. Sixtus, the history of which is said to have been as follows. St. Augustine had reported to the Pope that the English Christians were in the practice of venerating certain spurious relics of St. Sixtus, which were said to have been discovered in Kent. He accordingly requests that the genuine relics of the Martyr might be sent over, and the English thus enabled to satisfy their devotion upon a legitimate object.

² Deut. xxiii. 25.

St. Gregory answers; "We have complied with your request, in order that the people, who, on the spot of the martyrdom of St. Sixtus, are said to venerate certain relics which your Fraternity considers to be neither genuine nor, indeed, those of a Saint at all, may cease from paying devotion to a doubtful object, and receive, in exchange, the benefit of possessing the indubitable remains of the Saint. It seems, however, to me, that if the body, which the people believe to be that of some martyr, has been illustrated by no miracles, and if there are none among the older inhabitants of the country who can testify to having heard from their ancestors the acts of his martyrdom, the relics which have been sent at your request, should be deposited in a separate place, that the spot in which the forementioned body lies, may by all means be blocked up, and the people not allowed to forsake the certain and venerate the doubtful."

Other questions and answers follow, of no profit to the general reader, upon the subject of certain ceremonial disqualifications.

CHAPTER XVI.

LETTERS OF ST. GREGORY TO ETHELBERT AND BERTHA.

By the hands of St. Mellitus and his companions, St. Gregory sent letters to the king and queen of England. To Ethelbert he writes as follows :—

“To his most illustrious and most excellent son Ethelbert, king of England, Gregory, bishop, sends greeting.

“The purpose with which Almighty God, in His goodness, raises certain to the government of His people is, that through their means He may impart the gifts of His mercy to those over whom He sets them. And such we gather to be His will in respect of the English nation, over which your Excellence has been called to preside, in order that, through the advantages with which you have been favoured, the benefits of Divine grace may be bestowed upon the nation under your government. Guard then, we entreat you, illustrious son, and that with all possible solicitude, the grace you have been vouchsafed from above; lose no time in extending the faith of Christ among your subjects, multiply the zeal of your uprightness in their conversion, put down the worship of idols, lay low the structures of their temples; by exhortations, by threats, by conciliation, by correction, and by the exhibition of your own good example, build up your subjects in the utmost purity of life, that so you may receive in heaven the reward of Him whose name and whose saving knowledge you have extended upon earth. For He shall render the name of your

Excellence still more excellent among posterity, inasmuch as you have sought and maintained His honour in the world.

“ Thus it was that in ancient times the most godly emperor Constantine recalled the Roman commonwealth from the corrupt worship of idols, subjected it, with himself, to our Lord Jesus Christ, the Almighty God, and turned to Him with all his heart, and his people with him; and so it came to pass, that this same emperor surpassed the fame of the princes before him, by the greatness of his achievements. And in the same way may your Excellence now hasten to implant in the hearts of all the kings and people, your subjects, the knowledge of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, that so your glory may transcend in merits and renown that of all the ancient kings of your nation; and by how much you are instrumental in cleansing the sin of others among your subjects, by so much may you stand before the Judgment-seat securer of the pardon of your own.

“ Give a willing ear to the admonitions of our most reverend brother Augustine, Bishop; perform his instructions with all devotion, and store them with all care in your memory. Well versed is he in the monastic rule, filled with the knowledge of Holy Scripture, and endued, by God’s grace, with all good works. The more readily you give heed to him when he speaks to you of the things pertaining to Almighty God, the more speedily will Almighty God listen to his prayers in your regard. If (which may God forbid!) you should cast his words behind you, how, think you, will God hear his prayers for you, seeing that you refuse to hear him when he speaks for God? With all your mind, then, gird yourself, by His help, in the zeal of faith, and

correspond with his efforts through the power which God imparts to you from on high, that He may make you a partaker of His kingdom, whose Faith you have caused to be received, and guarded in your kingdom.

“We wish, moreover, your Excellence to be aware that, as we learn from the words of our Almighty Lord, in Holy Scripture, the end of this present world is at hand, and that kingdom of the Saints is about to come which is never to end. And, forasmuch as this same end of the world is drawing near, many signs are rife, or threatening, which before were not; such as sudden reverses of temperature, and terrific appearances in the sky, and unseasonable tempests, and wars, famine, pestilences, and earthquakes in parts. Not that all these things will happen in one day; but, in the next generation, all will come to pass. Now, should any of these wonders take place in your country, do not by any means let your heart be troubled, for these notices of the end of the world are sent in time, that so we may learn to be solicitous in the matter of our souls, and may be found hereafter to have been concerned about the hour of death, and prepared in all good works for the coming of our Judge. These things, most excellent son in the Faith, I have expressed in few words, to the end that when the Faith of Christ shall have grown and prevailed in your kingdom, the influence of our exhortations may also prevail with you more and more extensively, and we may be able to speak all the more freely, through the continually increasing joy of our hearts at the entire conversion of your nation.

“I have forwarded you a few trifling tokens of esteem,¹ which, however, you will not account trifling when you

¹ xenia.

bear in mind that they come to you with the blessing of St. Peter upon them. May God Almighty, then, vouchsafe to guard in your heart, and bring to perfection, the grace which He has bestowed. May He prolong your life here for the space of many a year, and after a lengthened term on earth, receive you into the congregation of His heavenly country. My good lord, and dear son in the Faith, may your Excellence be kept in safety by the grace which is from above. Dated, this 22d day of June, in the 19th year of the reign of our lord, the most religious Emperor Mauricius Tiberius, from the consulship of the same our lord, the 18th, and of the Indiction, the 4th. [A.D. 601].²

The nature of the presents which St. Gregory sent to king Ethelbert may be gathered from other parts of his correspondence ; especially from a letter to Recharedus,³ king of the Visigoths. They were apparently relics. To Queen Bertha the Pope wrote as follows :—

GREGORY TO BERTHA, QUEEN OF THE ENGLISH.

“Whoso is desirous of obtaining the glory of a heavenly kingdom, upon the termination of earthly power, should strive with the greater earnestness to gain souls to his Creator, to the end he may arrive at the object of his desire by the steps of good works ; and this is what we rejoice to think you have done. Our devout sons, Laurence, presbyter, and Peter, monk, acquainted us on their return with your Excellence’s gracious disposition and demeanour towards our most reverend brother and fellow-bishop Augustine, and with the great comfort he had derived from your Excellence’s

² S. Greg. Ep. xi. 66.

³ Ib. ix. 122.

affection; and we have rendered our thanks to Almighty God in that, of His mercy, He has deigned to reserve the conversion of the English nation for your reward. For even as by Helena, of precious memory, mother of the most religious Emperor Constantine, the hearts of the Romans were enkindled towards the Faith of Christ, we trust that in like manner, through the zeal of your Excellence, His mercy has been at work in the English nation. And, in truth, long time since, you have felt it your duty to employ your discretion, like a true Christian, in moving the heart of your consort and our illustrious son in the Faith, to the end he might, for the salvation of his kingdom and his own soul, embrace the Faith which ye follow, that so from him, and through his means, from the conversion of the whole nation, a meet reward may accrue to you in the joys of Heaven. For when once, as we have said, your Excellence was fortified in the true Faith, and possessed of the competent learning, there was nothing in this task which should have been tedious or difficult to you. And forasmuch as, of God's will, the present is the convenient season, strive that, with the help of Divine grace, ye may recover with increase such loss as may have followed upon neglect.

“Establish then, by assiduous exhortation, the heart of your illustrious partner in affection towards the Faith of Christ; may your solicitude be the means of filling him with increase in the love of God, and of enkindling his soul with a new ardour for the thorough conversion of the nation under his care, that so through the zeal of your devotion he may offer a great sacrifice to Almighty God, and the reports we have heard of you may still increase and be confirmed in all possible ways; since your good is spoken of not only among the Romans,

who have offered powerful prayers for your life, but in different parts of the world, and has reached even Constantinople, and come to the ears of our gracious Emperor. And in like manner as the consolations which have come of your Christian Excellence have been matter of joy to us, may the angels have cause of rejoicing in the perfection of the work you have begun! In aid, then, of the aforesaid our most reverend brother and fellow-bishop, and of the servants of God whom we have commissioned thither, use all zeal and devotion towards the conversion of the nation, that so in this world ye may reign happily with our illustrious son and your consort, and after a lengthened term of years may receive the joys of the life to come, which know no end. And we pray Almighty God to enkindle the heart of your Excellence by the fire of His grace both to perform our words, and to grant you an everlasting recompense as the fruit of good works pleasing to Himself.”⁴

It will have been seen that St. Gregory in his letter to King Ethelbert, advises the destruction of idolatrous temples.⁵ On maturer reflection, the holy father saw fit to retract, or modify, this injunction. The execution of it would of course have been exceedingly shocking to the prejudices of the people, and only justifiable, therefore, in the cause of religion. But, however natural to the earliest impulses of holy enthusiasm the utter obliteration of every vestige of Satan’s work, the Church in her wisdom has ever accepted the plea of “invincible ignorance” in extenuation of the sin of idol-worship; and far from accounting the places in which it has prevailed as irrecoverably desecrated by the unconscious pollution, she has rather rejoiced in asserting her power in the Spirit

⁴ Ep. xi. 29.

⁵ vid. supra, p. 173.

who dwells within her, to purify them from all stain and vindicate them to their rightful Owner, whom heathens "ignorantly worship." Not accounting that even the foul taint of original sin (so wilful transgression have not supervened) interposes a bar to the sanctifying power of the Holy Ghost, she has not shunned to introduce CHRIST into what had been heretofore the haunts of idolaters, as accounting her own exorcism sufficient to cleanse and prepare them for His reception.

The invasion of popular prejudices, in the instance of festivals and holy-days, would of course have been still more gratuitous ; for, as superstition ever contains within itself the seeds of true religion, it should never be otherwise than the object of tenderness and even reverence : and the Church, who is all to all, makes it a first principle to avail herself of all harmless, much more of all religious, however perverted, prepossessions—such as are, in an especial manner, those which relate to seasons and localities. For there is a sense in which even heathenism is a Divine system, notwithstanding the part which the devil bears in it ; just as the bodies with which we are born into the world are none the less God's work, because, through man's first transgression, our great Enemy has obtained a hold upon them. The line of true Christian wisdom and moderation is marked out by St. Gregory in the following letter, which represents his more deliberate judgment upon this question of religious policy.

TO HIS DEAREST SON MELLITUS, ABBOT,⁶ GREGORY, SERVANT OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD.

"After the departure of our congregation, who are

⁶ St. Mellitus, like St. Augustine before, appears to have been constituted by the Pope abbot of the missionary congregation.

now with you, great suspense was occasioned us by the absence of any information as to the prosperity of your journey. Whenever Almighty God shall bring you safe to our most reverend brother Augustine, Bishop, acquaint him with the result of my long deliberation on the subject of England, which is this ; that the idol-temples in that country ought not to be destroyed ; but that after the demolition of the actual idols contained in them, some water should be blessed, and sprinkled in the temples, and that then altars should be raised in them, and relics deposited. For, if the temples in question have been well constructed, they ought to be transferred from the worship of idols into the service of the true God ; in order that the nation, observing this tenderness in the treatment of its religious buildings, may be the rather led to put error from its heart, and when it comes to know and worship the true God, may the more readily resort to the temples with which it is familiar. Moreover, since it is their practice to slay numerous oxen in the sacrifices of their devils, for this solemnity some corresponding one should be substituted ; on the day of the dedication of the church, therefore, or of the martyrs whose relics are deposited in it, they may construct tents out of the branches of trees in the neighbourhood of these same churches, into which the old temples have been converted, and celebrate their festival with religious joy, no longer sacrificing their animals to the devil, but killing them for their own use to the glory of God, and giving thanks of their abundance to the Giver of all things, and thus being the rather disposed to inward satisfactions by how much their innocent festivities are more indulgently promoted. For it is an undoubted fact, that to mould hard minds into shape all at once, is impossible. He who strives to

reach the highest place ascends thither by slow steps, not by vaulting. Thus did our Lord make Himself known to the people of Israel in Egypt, while the honour of the sacrifices which were formerly offered to the devil He reserved to Himself, when He appointed the slaying of animals as a part of religious worship; that in this way, as their hearts were changed, they might partly give up and partly retain the use of sacrifices; offering indeed the same animals as before, but with a different object, and so not as the same sacrifices. Such are the instructions which I consider it necessary your Affection should convey to our aforementioned brother, that he, as on the spot, may consider how the whole matter may best be ordered.

“Dated the 17th day of June⁷ in the 19th year of our lord Mauricius Tiberius.”⁸

⁷ There must be some mistake here, as a letter evidently written after the rest, bears an earlier date by five days. Mabillon considers that the previous letters should be referred to June 15, this to June 28. (Ann. Bened. x. 2.) The incongruity is noticed in the edition of the works of St. Bede, published by the “English Historical Society,” to which the present writer is much indebted.

⁸ Ep. xi. 26.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PALL.

A FEW words must be said in this place concerning the Pall, or ensign of metropolitical dignity, transmitted by St. Gregory the Great to the first English Archbishop. The reader who is desirous of knowing all which may be known on the subject, will find a learned dissertation in Mr. Collier's Ecclesiastical History of England, from which, and from a few notices in St. Gregory's Letters, the following particulars are derived.

The Pall, in its most ancient form, was a magnificent robe worn by the metropolitans over the rest of the episcopal dress, to distinguish them from their suffragans. That, in St. Gregory's time, the Pall was a vestment of great splendour and dignity, appears from the warning against pride and worldliness, with which he was in the practice of accompanying the donation. The Pall, therefore, according to its first idea, was intended to remind its wearer of the dignity of his office, and to put him upon a life of suitable circumspection. In later times, however, the form of the Pall was changed; and, instead of a stately robe, or *pallium*, flowing from the shoulders down to the feet, it consisted merely of a strip of woollen cloth worn across the shoulders, to which were appended two other strips of the same material, one of them falling over the breast, and the other hanging down the back, each marked with a red cross, and the part across the shoulders with several smaller crosses,

and the whole being tacked on to the rest of the dress by three golden pins. And, as the shape of the modern differed from that of the more ancient Pall, so did its signification also ; for, while the magnificent vestment of St. Gregory's time was designed to betoken the dignity of the wearer, the simple appendage of more modern date was intended as a foil to the splendour of the episcopal habit, and a safeguard against the love of earthly pomp, which such accompaniments of high ecclesiastical state are apt to awaken in ill-regulated minds. Meanwhile, both the ancient and modern Pall had a farther and a common purpose, that of signifying the intimate connexion between metropolitans and the Holy See. For the Pall, before it was sent from Rome, was laid on the Tomb of the Apostles, and solemnly blessed ; so that it became to its wearer a continual pledge and memento of St. Peter's benediction.

The Pall was in use, as is evident from St. Gregory the Great's Letter to the Primate of Gaul; from times considerably earlier than the seventh century ; not, however, at first as an emblem of authority and token of dependence upon the Roman See, but rather, perhaps, as a mark of favour and personal consideration from the donors. Virgilius, archbishop of Arles, did not receive it till four years after he became archbishop, as appears from the date of St. Gregory's letter accompanying it, compared with that of his own elevation to the See. St. Gregory was the first Pope who conferred the Pall upon other archbishops of France besides the Archbishop of Arles. As in the case of other ecclesiastical usages and principles, what began as mere custom was ultimately formed into law. Thus, at the synod called by St. Boniface, the Apostle of Germany, A.D. 745, it was determined that all Christendom should thenceforth account Rome

as the centre of Catholic communion, and submit to the decisions of the Holy See.¹ And in token of such acknowledgment and dependence, all metropolitans were to apply to Rome for the Pall. The Archbishops of Rouen, Rheims, and Sens, stood out for the privileges of their national Church, and St. Boniface was for a time induced to admit their objections ; but at length, upon a remonstrance from Pope Zachary, he renewed his suit in the name of the Holy See, and the refractory archbishops were prevailed upon to accept the unwelcome gift, as it was now explained to them. In the year 872, during the Pontificate of Adrian II., it was decreed that the metropolitans should obtain confirmation from their respective patriarchs, either by imposition of hands, or by the grant of the Pall ; but this law, according to Collier, was in no respect more favourable to the power of the Pope in the West than to that of the Eastern patriarchs. Its promulgation, however, was actually followed by a rapid advance of the Roman influence in Europe, and paved the way for the vast spiritual acquisitions of St. Gregory VII.

St. Gregory named London as the seat of the English

¹ S. Bonifacii Ep. ad. Cuthbertum. This Cuthbert was Archbishop of Canterbury. The decree mentioned in the text, is expressed in the following words. It was forwarded to the Archbishop with the other determinations of the council.

“Decrevimus hæc in nostro Synodali conventu, et confessi sumus Fidem Catholicam, et unitatem, et subjectionem Romanæ Ecclesiæ, sine tenus vitæ nostræ, velle servare, sancto Petro et vicario ejus velle subjici ; Synodum per omnes annos congregare : metropolitanos pallia ab illâ sede quærere, et per omnia præcepta Sti. Petri canonicè sequi desiderare, ut inter oves sibi commendatas numerentur. Et isti confessioni universè consensimus, et subscripsimus, et ad corpus Sti. Petri, principis Apostolorum, direximus, quod gratulando clerus Romanus et pontifex suscepit.”

Primacy ; that city having been similarly dignified in British times. The new Archbishop was instructed to erect twelve sees in his province, and to name a bishop of York, who, as the Church should take root in the northern parts of England, was to be elevated to the rank of an archbishop, and to receive the Pall from Rome. The number of episcopal sees in the two provinces was ultimately to be equalized. During St. Augustine's life, the Archbishop of York was to pay him canonical obedience ; afterwards, he was to be independent of the See of London, but to be spiritually subject to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

During British ascendancy, there was a reason why London, as the chief emporium of England, should be also the great Christian metropolis. But since the successful invasion of the Saxons, Canterbury had become the seat of government, and the residence of the chief among the princes of the Heptarchy, whereas London was now but the capital of a subordinate province. When these circumstances were duly made known at Rome, St. Gregory, as appears, sanctioned the transfer of the Primacy from London to Canterbury. A modern enemy of the Holy See will have it that St. Augustine made this change upon his own authority ; but as this is antecedently improbable, considering his spiritual relationship to St. Gregory and to Rome, so likewise is it contradicted by a document of St. Gregory's successor, who speaks of that Pontiff as the author of the arrangement.

Thus, while the Catholic Church bore fruit upwards, it also struck root downwards, in English soil. The heathen saw and were afraid, the depths also were troubled. The Lord had once more His people here in England, and the idols bowed down as the cross was

reared. All was calm, orderly, and majestic, like the raising of the Temple without axe or hammer. The invasions of the world, which devastate, are vehement and tumultuous ; those of the Church, which fertilize, are peaceful and sure ; even as the Deluge, which destroyed the earth, came down in torrents, while the Spirit who renewed it was silent in His approach, though “mighty in operation.” Thus gently, thus “without observation,” because in the power of that Spirit, did the Church gain possession of English ground, and vindicate to herself, almost without men’s knowledge, the length and breadth of the land. Here was no violence towards existing prejudices, no contemptuous or intolerant dealing even with popular superstitions ; no bigotry, no fanaticism, no false step. Holy enthusiasm there was in abundance ; but enthusiasm is too deep to be fitful ; it is energetic, not busy. Let us now contract the sphere of our contemplations, and fix them upon the great centre of the picture, in which its whole spirit is as it were embodied and typified—a Missionary Archbishop, with the Catholic Faith as his message, and Miracles as his credentials.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ARCHIEPISCOPAL PROGRESS.

HAD St. Augustine wanted an excuse for resting from his labours, surely he might at this moment have found one without difficulty. The care of the English Church, with which he was now entrusted, was occupation enough, one would have thought, to employ the most active, and responsibility enough to satisfy the most scrupulous. It seemed indeed the natural thing for him to stay quietly at Canterbury, regulate the affairs of his monastery, nominate his suffragans, and delegate his missionary functions to younger and less dignified hands. But so it is, that Saints continually act at variance with our expectations. When we determine in our own minds that they have a call to be busy, they disappoint us by pleasing to be quiet ; when we consider it suitable to their dignity that they should rather superintend than work, they force us to the conclusion either that they are regardless of dignity, or that we do not understand what true dignity is.

St. Augustine, at all events, does not appear to have prized the *otium cum dignitate* ; nay, he chose, as we have already observed, a way of life which seems at first sight inconsistent with the post of an archbishop. The truth must be confessed, that Saints differ from common men in not being apt to catch at excuses. It does not satisfy them to know that a certain thing is not wrong ; they are deterred from taking up with it,

by the fact of its being but second-best. And thus it is, that they continually surprise us by their proceedings, as seeming to delight in striking out for themselves new and eccentric paths. And from not understanding them, we go on to criticize them, not always or at once remembering, that "the natural man discerneth not the things of the Spirit," and that, in the case of certain given persons, it is on the whole far more likely that such as we should be in the dark, than such as they in the wrong.

Whether, then, there be anything out of the common way in an archbishop turning missionary and traversing the country on foot (as perhaps there is not), at least there is something altogether wonderful and above man in that zeal for Christ which would not suffer this godly prelate to find rest for the sole of his foot in an as yet unconverted land. Nothing would content him but starting off, Metropolitan of all England as he was, without equipage or horse, with no body-guard but the poor, and no arms but the arms of Saints, prayer and watching, to search on the highways and among the hedges for guests to fill the vacant seats at the Lord's marriage-board. Alone, or perhaps with a few attendant monks, and certainly on foot, the holy Archbishop proceeded on his way, and took, as we may conceive, the great Roman road from London to the north of England. His very stature, as we have already observed, had something superhuman about it, and at once distinguished him from the crowds who speedily gathered round his path. He had not gone far before his journey began to assume the appearance of a triumphant Progress; if we may apply that word to the movement of a train in which were no insignia of worldly grandeur, and where the regulations of ceremonial were outstripped by the impulses of zeal

and affection. Never was crowned monarch or laurelled warrior more enthusiastically greeted, more multitudinously followed, than was that humble and mortified archbishop. Like a true apostle as he was, he carried with him neither purse, nor scrip, nor provision for his journey;¹ yet lacked he not all necessities, for his trust was in Him who feedeth the young ravens that call upon Him, and in whose sight His own elect are of more price than many sparrows.

On coming near the city of Eboracum, the Saint was accosted by a man who sat by the wayside begging, and who laboured under the two-fold scourge of blindness and palsy. The Saint remembered that great Apostle to whom he was chiefly bound, who said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee; in the Name of JESUS CHRIST of Nazareth rise up and walk." Why should not that Name work miracles at any time? Why not among ourselves now-a-days? Truly, because we lack the conditions of its power—Catholic faith and Catholic sanctity. But here was no bar to its sovereign efficacy; and accordingly, if we may trust those who have transmitted what they received, the prayer of the Saint was answered, and his Divine commission accredited in the eyes of the unbelievers. The paralytic leapt like a hart, and the eyes of the blind were opened. Now, whether this and other miracles which we shall relate, after those who have gone into their evidence, actually happened as they are recorded, or form rather the illustrations than the instances of the supernatural power unquestionably inherent in all the true Saints of God, on this point we are warranted in the present, if in any case, in being com-

¹ Mabillon, *Acta Sanct. Bened. in vitâ S. Augustini.*

paratively little solicitous ; for that St. Augustine of Canterbury worked miracles for the conversion of England is acknowledged even by many Protestants ; and what precisely those miracles were, is surely a secondary consideration. Meanwhile, it will not be necessary to interrupt the thread of the narrative farther than by saying that if the reader so far forgets that he is occupied upon a portion of ecclesiastical history as to stumble at the marvellous portions of the present biographical sketch, it is hoped he will at least suspend his judgment till a few pages further on, or accept the statements subject to any qualifications which may secure them from the chance of irreverent usage, and him from the risk of that especial blasphemy which consists in slighting the manifestations of God's Holy Spirit ; a sin, one should have thought, denounced by our Blessed Lord in language sufficiently awful to make the possibility of it an unspeakably more formidable alternative than any amount of credulity. Not indeed as if the wanton circulation, and over easy acceptance, of miraculous histories, were an insignificant mischief, seeing that we must not give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme. But, taking our Divine Redeemer's singular commendation of the temper which men call credulous, in connexion with His terrific denunciation of the sin which in its measure is involved in every deliberate trifling with the genuine works of the Spirit, it seems strange indeed that professing Christians should count it a safer thing to scoff at miracles as such, than to enter upon the Lives of the Saints as upon a new world of wonders whose sights speedily conform the habits of vision to their own standard, till at length the eye sees objects before it which are, perhaps, but the reflections of images within. Upon the great principle recommended by Butler, in

his Analogy, of taking the safer side in matters of religion which are felt to be doubtful, surely every truly wise man will prefer the alternative of believing some miracles which may be false, to that of encouraging himself in a critical, not to say sceptical, temper. On the side of the historian of the Church, or the biographer of Saints, there lies doubtless a great duty of caution; yet the rash and uninstructed zeal of historians and biographers, though it suggests the temptation, does not therefore furnish the excuse, to languor of belief, still less to irreverence of objection, in readers.

To return from our digression: It was most probably during this northern progress of the great archbishop that the Church received that vast accession of converts at one time, which has sometimes, to all appearance, been confused with the baptism of the 10,000 at Canterbury. There seems undoubtedly to have been a baptism of multitudes at once in the river Swale; but we suppose it not to have taken place at the Christmas of 597, which was before St. Augustine had proceeded on his missionary travels, but about the summer of 602, the period with which we are now more immediately engaged. It is mentioned by annalists, as a miraculous circumstance, that so prodigious a multitude should have received baptism by immersion in a deep stream, without a single instance of loss of life or bodily injury. In truth, what we call the "providential" runs up into almost inextricable implication with the "miraculous."

The following incident, which is related by Mabillon, belongs to the class of supernatural occurrences which are not merely succours to faith, like the last mentioned, but attestations to the fact of Divine power in the sight of the unbelieving world. Such verifications of high

ministerial claims, (even taking that low *à priori* ground which finds its place in treatises on Christian Evidence,) as they are peculiarly needful, so of God's mercy it is likely that they will be largely vouchsafed, as aids to the work of the Missionary.

As St. Augustine was leaving York, he was met by a leper labouring under a peculiarly distressing form of that loathsome disease. His articulation was affected by the malady, and he had no way of making his sufferings and necessities known but by indistinct sounds, as it had been the cry of some animal. Encouraged by the sweet smile and outstretched hand of the messenger of mercy, he managed to crawl up to him, and came under the power of the hand which was uplifted to bless him. Then, his eye beaming with light expressive of the soul's illumination, and his voice distilling words of honey, "In the Name of our Lord and Saviour," said the Saint, "be thou clean from all defilement." "Not so quickly," proceeds the annalist, "was Naaman, the Syrian, cured of his plague, for he was bid to wash seven times in the Jordan. For Augustine spake" (not like one of the old prophets but) "in the strength of His Word who says in the Gospel, 'Be thou clean,' and whose word runneth swiftly. O thrice-blessed poverty in Christ! O poverty, that art the true riches! richer than all the wealth of the earth! O treasure, exhaustless in abundance! where, not the gold which covetous mortals affect, but richer than gold incomparably, is dealt out to overflowing the salvation of body and soul 'without money and without price.'"

Such is the strain in which monks describe the acts of the Saints. In proportion as their eye is dulled to the claims of the outer, it is sharpened to behold the wonders of the inner world. Such Christians live and

range as in an element of their own. Their histories are accordingly almost like meditations ; no wonder if to men, whose conversation is in this lower world, the records of their experience should be wearisome as the tales of dreamers, their chronicles of events read like fiction, their comments sound like the ravings of fanaticism.

CHAPTER XIX.

ST. AUGUSTINE. HIS MIRACLES AND THEIR EVIDENCE.

FEW readers will be disposed to deny that the miracles of the Apostle of England differ, as to the first impression with which they strike us, from the miracles of some other Saints with whom we happen to be less familiar. Their evidence is not necessarily more trustworthy, but it is certainly more available: there requires a greater hardihood in scepticism to resist it; a greater disregard of public opinion to write or speak against it. Nothing, surely, can be less philosophical, as well as less religious, than objections to any recorded miracle of any age, grounded simply upon the frivolousness (as men speak) of its character, or the inadequacy of its object. What is the meaning of all such talk? Are we wiser than God, or are His ways as our ways? Let cavillers at miracles say so in good earnest, and we shall then know how to deal with them. But as yet, at least, it is happily less respectable to broach infidelity, than to write down the *principle* of all belief. Yet, if men who deal with the lives of the Saints upon *à priori* grounds do not, happily for themselves, discern the dangerous contiguity of their reasonings to those of the infidel, and even the atheist, there are not wanting shrewder intellects than their own which will help them to the discovery. If they fancy themselves able to distinguish to their own satisfaction between, on the

one hand, such antecedent objections (for it is of antecedent objections only that we are here speaking) to the miracles of the Saints, and, on the other, the flippancies of which the Old Testament has, ere now, been made the subject, there are others cleverer than themselves, though less reputable, who will gladly employ the respectability of their names to obtain a hearing for arguments at once deeper and more consistent than their own.

But, at all events, the history of St. Augustine of Canterbury has this advantage over some others, that there is a dignity on the very face of it which (to use a forcible Latin word) “profligates” calumny, —not merely wards it off, but routs, and explodes, and shames it. As to the mighty works which are related of our apostle, they are, on the whole, surely of that simple and straightforward character which rather strikingly contradistinguishes the Evangelical and Apostolical miracles from some of the Prophetical ; they are of a kind fitted to overrule unbelief, and not merely to sustain faith. And this is what men naturally expect in the case of Divine manifestations accompanying and illustrating a mission to the heathen.

But, again, it is a considerable security for the reverent acceptance of the history of St. Augustine, that he was thus, in fact, a Missionary. This circumstance at once supplies what intellectual men presumptuously demand, an ostensible cause for the intervention of direct and obvious supernatural agency. Objectors are certainly more tolerant of miraculous records, in the case of missionaries, than of any other Saints ; not seeing, apparently, that if they allow miracles to missionaries, they give up the question of principle, and make their stand upon that of degree ; they do not deny that

Almighty God has signally interposed in the later as well as in the earlier Church, but they claim to be judges of the circumstances under which it is reasonable that He should interpose. This is a great step—or rather it narrows the ground between these objectors and the Catholics almost to contact; not indeed in *fact*, but (which is a widely different thing) in *logic*. The intellectual barriers are removed, the ethical, alas! are sometimes even strengthened, rather than the contrary, by the logical approximation.

Such cases may not unfairly be compared with that of St. Thomas. And our Blessed Lord seems to deal with them in a like condescending way, as with that holy Apostle, when he stipulated for stronger evidence than his Lord had counted sufficient. Such evidence was indeed forthcoming at his demand; but his satisfaction was without a blessing. Let us also remember, as instructed by this example, that it is the *temper* of faith which is necessarily and always blessed by CHRIST our Redeemer, but that the mere *act* of assent is not so necessarily or always blessed.

Again the inquiry arises, if Christianity did not make its way into Saxon England by miracles, how came its progress to be so rapid and so wide? Many outward circumstances did undoubtedly, through the mercy of Divine Providence, concur with supernatural agency to favour the result; but this, too, was the case in the original propagation of Christianity. If the pacification of the Roman world in the time of Augustus, be none the more a “cause” (in the infidel sense) of the triumph of Christianity at its first introduction, because unbelievers have so magnified it, or if, rather, but a secondary and tributary cause, where by them it is dignified to the rank of a primary one, then is it no dero-

gation from the supernatural power which wrought to the conversion of England, that the progress of the blessed Gospel here was facilitated by the political circumstances of the time when it was brought over. Instead of considering, with the infidel, that the miracles are not certain because the preparation was apparent, the believer will rather look upon the preparation as but an additional evidence of that providential design which was exhibited in the miracles. Or if, again, the worn-out superstitions of the ancient mythology offered so feeble a resistance to the power of the Truth in the world at large, as to give that Truth, so satisfactory to the cravings of man's moral nature, so harmonious in its proportions, so beautiful in its results, an easy victory among the nations of antiquity, while yet it is esteemed none the less certain that the Arm of the Lord was visibly with it, neither, surely, can the rapid progress of Christianity in this country be set down rather to the weakness of the power which was arrayed against it, than to the evident display of Divine tokens in its behalf. For, perhaps, there was never a religious system more deeply tinctured with the genius of a people than was that of our Saxon forefathers. And if their warlike temper and habits gave them many advantages towards the reception of Christianity over those polished and worldly-wise nations among which St. Paul preached, these advantages were surely counterbalanced by the chivalrous pertinacity with which the warrior children of warrior parents, educated for heroes, and, as we may say, dieted on blood, would be apt to cleave to the stern and cruel rites of Woden and Tuisco.

Again, a belief in the miraculous power of St. Augustine is necessary to the history. It has never been questioned that two separate Conferences were held with

the British bishops, and that the issue of the former was determined by a miraculous display in favour of the Saint. No other hypothesis, it is believed, but that of a miracle has ever been devised to explain why the first meeting was so abruptly brought to a close. And this is the more remarkable, considering the feuds between the Britons and the Saxons, and the angry discussions, of which, from first to last, those celebrated Conferences have been the subject.

This acquiescence, even on the part of avowed adversaries of the Catholic Faith, in the miraculous claims of St. Augustine, is due, perhaps, in no small degree to the respect in which St. Bede, that especially English historian of the Church, has ever been held among Protestants as well as others. For the testimony of that *naïf* and thoroughly uncontroversial writer (how, indeed, should they be controversial who knew but of the One Faith ?) is so explicit to the abundance of the manifestations vouchsafed in our Saint, as to find its response in simple and ingenuous minds,—and this independently of the weight which so early an authority must carry with it in the estimation of critics. But the fact of these miracles is attested by a writer yet earlier than St. Bede ; himself also a Saint, contemporary with St. Augustine, and whose means of ascertaining the circumstances to which he testifies, were of the readiest and completest. Let us now hear how St. Gregory addresses St. Augustine on the very subject of the miracles which had been wrought by him during the earlier part of his English mission. Let us observe, especially, the *natural* way in which this great Saint notices the glorious works of his son in the Faith, his brother in the Kingdom of Heaven. It would certainly appear, from his letter, as if the report of St.

Augustine's miracles had been neither beyond his expectation, nor in contradiction to his experience.

GREGORY TO AUGUSTINE, BISHOP OF THE ENGLISH.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will ! For the corn of wheat which fell into the ground is dead, [and hath brought forth much fruit,¹] that so He should not reign alone in heaven, by whose death we live, by whose weakness we are strengthened, by whose Passion we are snatched from suffering, through whose love we were led to seek in Britain the brethren whom we knew not, of whose Gift we have found those whom we sought in ignorance. But who is sufficient to declare what joy sprang up in the hearts of all the faithful in this place since the English nation, through the operation of the grace of Almighty God, and the labours of your Fraternity, hath been rid of the darkness of error, and overspread with the light of our holy Faith ? since, with a perfect mind, this people now tread their idols under foot, whereunto, in the madness of superstition, they have heretofore been subject ; since they now worship God out of a pure heart ; since, recovered from the helplessness of their evil deeds, they are now bound by the strict rules of holy teaching ; since now, they are with all their mind subject to Divine precepts, and aided by the understanding of them ; since now they are humbled even to the dust in prayer, and lie prostrate in spirit on the ground. Whose work is this but His who saith, ‘ My Father worketh hitherto, and I work ? ’² Who, that He might shew Himself willing to convert the world,

¹ Vid. John xii. 24.

² John v. 17.

not by man's power, but Himself by His own strength, chose men of no letters for the preachers whom He would send into the world. And this, too, He hath also done in this instance also, in that, among the English people, He hath deigned to perform deeds of strength through the infirmity of the weak.

“Howbeit, dearest brother, there is in that heavenly Gift what, in the midst of all our great joy, may well cause us to fear, and that with an exceeding great fear. I well know that by the hands of your Affection, Almighty God hath wrought great miracles in the nation of which He would make choice. Need is there, then, that concerning this same heavenly Gift, you should at once rejoice while you fear, and fear while you rejoice. Rejoice assuredly you may, in that the souls of the English, through exterior miracles, are drawn towards interior grace; yet must you also fear, lest, among the signs which are wrought by you, your feeble mind be lifted up into presumption of itself, and in proportion as it is exalted in honour from without, fall through vain-glory from within. We ought to bear in mind that the disciples, when they returned with joy from preaching, and said unto the Lord, ‘Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name,’ were straightway answered, ‘In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you, but rather rejoice, because your names are written in Heaven.’³ For they, in rejoicing over miracles, had set their heart on a joy, private and temporal. But from the private joy they are recalled to the public, from the temporal to the eternal, when it is said to them, ‘In this rejoice, that your names are written in Heaven.’ It is not all

³ Luke, x. 20.

the elect who work miracles ; howbeit, all their names are kept written in Heaven. For, to the disciples of the Truth, there should be no joy but on account of that good which they have in common with all, and wherein there is no end of their joy.

“ It remains then, dearest brother, that, in the midst of those things which you do externally by the power of God, you should never cease from judging yourself discreetly within ; and should discreetly understand both concerning yourself, who you are, and likewise how high a grace is with this same nation, towards whose conversion you have been vouchsafed even the power of miracles. And if you remember yourself to have ever transgressed, whether in word or in deed, in the sight of your Creator, call this continually to mind, to the end the remembrance of your guilt may repress the mounting pride of your heart. And whatever power to do signs you shall receive, or have received, account not this as a gift to yourself, but rather to those for whose salvation such gifts have been vouchsafed you.

“ And while on this subject, it is impossible not to remember what happened in the case of one of God’s servants, and one very precious in His sight. Moses, truly, whilst leading the people of God out of Egypt, wrought, as your Fraternity well knows, many wondrous signs in that country. And in his fast of forty days on Mount Sinai, he received the Tables of the Law in the midst of lightnings and thunders, and, while all the people feared greatly, was joined—he alone—with Almighty God in intimate and familiar converse. Then opened he a path through the Red Sea, and had the pillar of a cloud as a guide in his way ; when the people hungered, he brought them down manna from Heaven, and by a miracle satisfied their desire, even to

excess, with abundance of flesh in the wilderness. And then, when, in the time of drought, they came near a rock, his faith failed him, and he doubted whether he could bring water out of it; but at the word of the Lord, he struck it, and the water burst forth in torrents. And, after this, how many miracles he wrought for thirty and eight years in the desert, who shall be able to account or to find out? As often as any doubtful matter pressed on his mind, he entered into the tabernacle⁴ and inquired of the Lord in secret, and was straightway instructed by the Lord concerning the matter. And when the Lord was angry with the people, he appeased Him by the intervention of his prayers; and those who rose up in pride and made divisions among the people, he caused to be swallowed up in the cavity of the yawning earth. The enemy he harassed by victories, and displayed signs among the people. But when at length he reached the Land of Promise, he was called up into the Mount and was reminded of the sin he had committed thirty and eight years before, when he doubted of his power to bring forth the water. And he learned that for this he could not enter the Land of Promise. By this instance we learn how fearful a thing is the judgment of God, who wrought such mighty works by this His servant, yet kept his sin so long in remembrance.

“Therefore, dearest brother, if we must acknowledge that he, who was thus especially chosen by Almighty God, did still, after so many signs, die for his sin, what ought to be our fear, who know not as yet whether we be of the elect at all?

“Touching miracles which have been done by the

⁴ Exod. xxxiii. 9.

reprobate, what shall I say to your Fraternity who know so well the words which His Truth spake in the Gospel? ‘Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy Name? and in Thy Name have cast out devils? and in Thy Name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.’ Very great restraint, then, must be put on the mind in the midst of signs and miracles, lest, perchance, a man seek his own glory in these things, and rejoice with a merely private joy at the greatness of his exaltation. Signs are given for the gaining of souls, and towards His glory by whose power they are wrought. One sign the Lord hath given us, wherein we may rejoice with exceeding joy, and whereby we may recognise in ourselves the glory of election,—‘By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another;’⁵ And this sign the prophet sought when he said, ‘Shew me some token for good, that they which hate me may see it and be ashamed.’⁶

“These things I say, because I desire to bring down the mind of him who hears me to the depth of humility. But I know that your humility hath a just confidence of its own. I myself am a sinner; and I hold it in most certain hope, that, by the grace of God, even our Lord Jesus Christ, our Almighty Creator and Redeemer, your sins have been already forgiven, and therefore you are in the number of the elect, so that the sins of others may be forgiven by you. Nor will your guilt bring sorrow in time to come, since your part it is to give joy in Heaven by the conversion of many. He, the same our Creator and Redeemer, said, when speaking of

⁵ John xiii. 35.

⁶ Ps. lxxxvi. 17. (lxxxv. Vulg.)

the repentance of man, ‘ I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.’⁷ And if great joy, then, be in Heaven over one penitent, what may we suppose that joy to be, when so vast a nation is converted from its error, and, coming to the Faith, condemns, by repentance, all the evil that it hath done? Let us unite in this joy of the Angels of Heaven, by concluding with these same words of Angels with which we began. Let us say—let us one and all say, ‘ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.’ ”⁸

Miserable, indeed, is it to interrupt the biography of a Saint with discussions of an apologetic sound! Miserable to exhibit such a letter as this, for evidence’s rather than for edification’s sake! May these blessed Saints forgive the injury to their names, if such it be! And may HE, whom we should chiefly fear to offend, acquit of all irreverence this attempt to justify the marvels of His grace in the sight of the unbeliever!

⁷ Luke xv. 7.

⁸ Lib. xi. Ep. 28.

CHAPTER XX.

FIRST PANBRITANNIC CONFERENCE.

THE date of this celebrated meeting, as of other events in the Life of St. Augustine of Canterbury, is a subject of controversy among ecclesiastical antiquaries. It has been attributed severally to the years 599, 601, 602, 603, and even 604. Its scene is acknowledged, on all hands, to have been a certain spot "in the province of the Huiccii, on the confines of the West Saxons," and most probably in one or other of the two present counties of Gloucester or Worcester. Some fix it at a place called Aust, or Aust-clive in the former county, lying on the Severn, the usual passage for ferry-boats from England into South Wales, and where Edward the Elder had afterwards an interview with the Welsh Prince, Leoline; though others are of opinion that, although the site is thus correctly determined, the Conference itself took place, not in a town, but under the shadow of an oak-tree. That, at any rate, it was near an oak, appears from the ancient name of the spot, "Augustinaes-ac."¹

It does not appear that St. Augustine took more than one great journey into the interior of England;

¹ See Cressy, *Hist. of Brittany*, B. xiii. c. 17, whose reasons for considering that the Conference took place within-doors, in some village, appear satisfactory.

nor, considering the hindrances to locomotion which those days presented, and the shortness of the time into which his missionary labours were compressed, is it likely that, without some strong motive, he should have gone twice over the same ground. Now there is reason for supposing that the Saint was at different times in the northern, western, and midland parts of England ; for various records furnish traces of his footsteps in Yorkshire, Dorsetshire, and Oxfordshire. If, then, his Yorkshire mission happened, as we have been supposing, in 602, and if, as Gocelyn represents, he went from Yorkshire to the West of England, may it not be supposed, with considerable probability, that he took Worcestershire and Gloucestershire on his way from Yorkshire into Dorsetshire ? This would bring the Synod of Augustinaes-ac to about the year 603, which tallies with the computations of some chronologists. If, as Gocelyn seems to think, the Conferences with the British bishops preceded the Yorkshire expedition, St. Augustine must have come back to London before going into the West, which does not agree with Gocelyn's own words.² Such inquiries are neither very interesting nor very important,—except, indeed, as all is interesting and important which relates to the Saints. However, it is some compensation to their natural dulness, that they incidentally supply food for the imagination. It matters little towards the great objects of ecclesiastical history and biography, whether the Saint went this way or that, or was present at some remarkable transaction in one year or in another. But it vivifies our thoughts of him to have some notion even upon the most subordinate topics of his history ; and far more essential is

² In occidentalem ab aquilonali plaga *divertit*.

it that such a notion should be definite, than that it should be true. And so much concerning the time and the place of the Conference. Now let us turn our attention to the circumstances and subject of it.

We have lost sight of the British Church since 586, when Theonus and Thadioc, archbishops respectively of London and York, quitted their sees, bearing with them the relics of Saints, and the appurtenances of Divine Service, and withdrew into Wales. This was virtually ceding the eastern and southern parts of the island to the idolaters: but they had no alternative except death or flight; and it was not against their Lord's command, when persecuted in one city, to flee to another. That individual British Christians were mixed up, even at the time of St. Augustine's arrival, with the Saxon population, in the character of slaves, is, as a matter of history, unquestionable; but how far there could be anything like Christianity in a country where was no Church government, nor, as far as appears, any Christian church, (excepting in Cornwall, which was a British settlement, and at Canterbury, where St. Martin's had been converted into a sort of private chapel for the Queen,) does not sufficiently appear, though an opinion has prevailed extensively to the contrary. In Wales, however, the case was far otherwise; in Wales were several bishops, one large monastery, at least, with a school of clerical education, consecrated places for Divine worship, and a regular body of Clergy, secular as well as regular.

We have already seen³ that St. Gregory gave St. Augustine authority over the British bishops, in these words: "All the bishops of Britain we commit to your

³ Vid. *supra*, p. 171.

Fraternity." And now the time was come for the Archbishop to assert his prerogative.

It must have been a very trying situation, that of the British Christians. Their country was in the hands of implacable enemies, of foreigners and idolaters ; with themselves, at once exiled and not expatriated, was right without possession, and the knowledge of the Truth, without the ability to impart it. Fretted, if not harassed, by the neighbourhood of their conquerors, they had lost a footing in their own country without gaining one in another ; they were prisoners in their own house. To have sallied forth, cross in hand, and mixed, at the imminent peril of their lives, among their prosperous and insulting conquerors ; to have gone into the midst of their bitterest enemies, not as vindicators of right, but as ministers of peace ; to have had to waive all claims but that of priority in the Kingdom of Heaven, and virtually recognize the position of their invaders, by the very fact of entering into pacific relations with them,—this would have been, indeed, a sore struggle to human nature. These British Christians of St. Augustine's time have been the subjects of a good deal of historical unfairness on both sides ; they are all in the wrong with one set of writers, and all in the right with another. The truth seems to lie in a mean. There were certainly no Saints and great men among them ; but when we have said this, we have surely given the sum of their offending ; or at least expressed the severest judgment which circumstances warrant. It is to be feared that pride *was* at the root of their apathy ; but it was probably concealed from themselves under some one of those countless disguises by which it passes itself off in a creditable character to all but minds of the tenderest conscientiousness, and most determined resolution. At

any rate, we Englishmen of this day, with our high national professions, and our jealousy of foreign interference, have no right to be over critical upon the subject of exclusiveness.

And again, it may readily be conceived that these injured and uneasy exiles would look with no very favourable eyes upon the new Archbishop. Notwithstanding all their natural and human feelings and antipathies, it could not but at times haunt them painfully, that they were Christians, and their nearest neighbours idolaters, and that in Christ there is neither barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free. They could not but acknowledge that a great work lay at their doors, whatever reasons there might exist for neglecting or delaying it. Perhaps they still looked to undertake it, and the time was not yet come. Meanwhile there penetrated, even as far as them, the rumour of this "Italian priest," (as they might be tempted to think of him,) who, appearing one day on the shores of England, without intelligible claim, or ostensible reason, or satisfactory credentials, had made his way, with forty adventurers like himself, to the seat of government and the court of royalty, and there had ingratiated himself with men in power, and risen by rapid steps to the throne which might seem to belong, as of right, to others. And now he was perambulating the land from end to end, with fame before and blessings behind him. Who shall say that, under such circumstances, all dissatisfaction must needs have been ingratitude, and all mistrust envy? Considering the difficulty of accurate information peculiar to those uncivilized times, the impediments to intercourse between the Britons and their enemies, with the various liabilities to misrepresentation, and temptations to prejudice, which circumstances created, it really seems no

necessary discredit whatever to the aboriginal Christians of this island, that, victims as they had conceivably been, of fitful rumours and coloured representations, they should have been somewhat disconcerted at the tidings of St. Augustine's approach, and have given him a less courteous reception than was meet.

Forth, however, they came, like the ghosts of a Church which men had supposed to have been long "quietly inurned;" or like antediluvian relics forced up by some sudden convulsion to the surface of the ground; witnesses, in the sight even of unbelievers, to the Church's age, and links of connexion with the aboriginal days. On this first occasion there seem to have come but one or two representatives of the ancient hierarchy of Britain, with certain of the clergy; all accounts speak of the former conference as far less numerously attended and formally conducted than the latter.

The life of the British Church was not indeed extinct, but it was a slumbering and torpid life. Mutual sympathy between the members of Christ's Body, is the very condition of their energy and coherence; and mutual sympathy there can be none—at least, none which is thrilling and powerful, without active intercommunion. The several members of each single Church are not more intimately knit together in one communion and fellowship, than is that special Church herself with the other component parts of the great Christian family. Each portion of Christ's heritage is a participant in the joys and sufferings of the rest; the greater has no right to consider itself self-sufficient, nor the lesser insignificant; the foot and the hand cannot dispense each with the other's ministrations. The Church is shadowed forth in Holy Scripture under all those images which especially

denote the intimacy of mutual relation between the parts, and of the parts to the whole. It is the Vine whose sap circulates through all the branches ; it is the building "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth ;" it is the river of Paradise, whose divergent streams fertilize the earth. Branches severed from the main stem flourish awhile, and then die ; they have no vigour of their own. That they vegetate at all, in their separated state, this proves nothing but the tenacity of the life which for a season inheres in them. They survive the convulsion which has rent them from the parent stock, but it is a sickly and a pining life which still cleaves to them. They are not dead, but they do not thrive. It is the same with an amputated limb ; it does not stiffen and shrivel up at once ; but it is past animating, and what is more, the main body resents the injury which has been done it, and leaves the insulated branch, or member, as it were, to its fate. We cannot re-insert it so as to make it share in the healthful juices of the system. We may tie it on, but the system works independently of it, and it dies none the less. A limb which is only broken, may be reset ; a branch which is only languid, may be reinvigorated ; but once detach it from the trunk, and all hope of reunion must end.

Not less fatal to the life—at least to the vigour, of the detached member is every case of real, energetic schism in the Christian Body. What schism *is*, this is a question by itself. Like all other sins, it admits of its multifarious degrees, and its indefinitely near approximations without actual contact. And what is true of bodies *in* schism, is, by the very terms of the analogy just employed, not true of bodies only on the verge of it, or clear of its special guilt.

And this latter appears to have been precisely the case of the ancient British Church—at all events, till it formally repudiated the authority of St. Augustine. Whether that act of repudiation made the whole difference between communion and non-communion, is a matter which our present ecclesiastical position precludes us from discussing without liability to misapprehension, or danger of disloyalty, either to our own communion, or to the Church Catholic; but, at any rate, the British Christians were not in the same *moral* situation before and after the “Synod of Augustine’s Oak,” for their sin, if such it were, was rendered, by the issue of that meeting, a conscious and formal, when before it had been but a latent and undeveloped one.

Our present concern, however, is with the state of the British Church anterior to the former of the two conferences. And surely that state was one far less of fault than of misfortune. The ancient Church of Britain, like every other Church in those days of Christendom, was nominally and externally in communion with the See of Rome; but from some of the special blessings of that dependence upon the centre of unity, the Church of Britain had long been cut off; all political connexion between this island and Rome had ceased from a comparatively early time, and, while the flame of zeal and charity which St. Germanus had kindled, was waxing continually weaker and weaker, the British Church, whether through apathy or dislike of foreign interference, made no effort to replenish its wasting lamp from an external source. It is plainly impossible that either unity or uniformity can be maintained, if Churches refuse to confer and (if we may use the expression) compare notes, with one another. As to doctrinal orthodoxy, indeed, there seems no good reason for

supposing that the British Church swerved in the succeeding generations from the ancient traditions restored by St. Germanus ; but in points of ecclesiastical practice, trenching hard upon essentials, a very serious amount of slovenliness had crept in without remonstrance, and was harboured without apparent consciousness. We have already noticed certain irregularities, perhaps under the circumstances inevitable, in the consecration of St. Kentigern,³ which do not seem to have attracted observation till the active communication between England and the See of Rome was revived in the time of St. Gregory. A still more considerable departure from ecclesiastical tradition and usage seems to have gained ground about the same period, (the earlier part of the sixth century,) which will require a distinct consideration in this place.

As early as the second century, a difference sprang up between the East and West on the subject of keeping Easter. Certain Asiatics, professing to follow the tradition of St. John, were for keeping the Paschal Feast on the 14th day of the first Jewish month, coincidently with the celebration of the Passover among the Jews ; and three days afterwards, without regard to the day of the week, they commemorated our Lord's Resurrection. The Western Churches followed a different method, for which they pleaded the authority of St. Peter. They kept Easter on the Sunday intervening between the 14th and 21st day of the moon of March. Thus while (so far like the others) they did not destroy, but fulfil the ancient ceremonial law, in keeping the Passover between the 14th day at evening and the 21st day at evening, they invariably commemorated the Resurrec-

³ Vid. *supra*, p. 38.

tion on "the first day of the week." Hence arose a sharp controversy between the East and West: the Western Churches accused those of the East of Judaism; while they were themselves in turn charged with making the law of none effect through their own unauthorized traditions. About the middle of the second century, St. Polycarp came to Rome to confer with Pope Anicetus on the subject; but they separated without any satisfactory result. Almost fifty years later, Pope Victor, after having consulted with other bishops of the West, issued a decree in which the Quartodecimans (or maintainers of the 14th day against the Sunday) refused to acquiesce, and Pope Victor then proceeded to excommunicate the refractory bishops. Peace was afterwards restored by the intervention of St. Irenæus, the great Bishop of Lyons; and the contending Churches remained in the practice of their own several rules, till the Councils of Arles and Nicæa, which happened nearly at the same time, and both in the earlier part of the fourth century. At the Council of Nicæa the Western rule was adopted as the law of Christendom.

As the British Church was represented, certainly at Arles, and possibly also at Nicæa, and was afterwards complimented by the Emperor Constantine for having come in to the Nicæan decrees,⁴ it is not to be doubted that any irregularity in the point of Easter which may have afterwards prevailed in these islands was of later and of native growth. But indeed it does not appear that the British Church ever deviated into the Quartodeciman practice. It acquiesced in a medium between the Catholic and the schismatical observance; always keeping Easter on a Sunday, but not taking care to keep

⁴ Vid. *supra*, p. 39.

clear of the actual 14th day of the moon. Thus its practice was semi-Catholic and semi-Judaizing.

Now, in one point of view, no doubt, it may be said, and with great truth, the less the difference the greater the schism. So far it was doubtless very inexcusable in the British Christians to break unity for what would have been a mere trifle, if wanton and wilful difference from Catholic rule can ever be such. Thus, however, it was ; and when St. Augustine proposed to them conformity on the point of Easter as one of the conditions of union with the See of Canterbury, and through it with the Chair of St. Peter, they demurred. Of three propositions, then, which St. Augustine submitted to the British delegates, this was the first.

The second point of discrepancy between British and Catholic practice upon which St. Augustine stood out, related to the Sacrament of Baptism. In what precise respect the British baptisms were irregular, does not clearly appear ; but as serious objection was taken by the Archbishop to their mode of administration, it may well be supposed that the irregularity was one which went to affect the essence of the Sacrament. For it does not seem that St. Augustine was in the least disposed to be captious and over-exacting. It is distinctly said by St. Bede that "in many respects the British Church acted at variance with ecclesiastical unity,"⁵ so that St. Augustine selected the more prominent instances only. Now, when it is remembered, on the one hand, how jealous a watch the Catholic Church has ever exercised over the manner of celebrating the Sacraments, and, on the other, how little unbelievers and heretics, since they profane and set at nought the Sacraments themselves, are likely

⁵ H. E. lib. ii. c. 2.

to appreciate this caution, it is surely no wonder either that St. Augustine should have made a stand upon this requirement, or that he should have been regarded by many critics as a mere formalist and trifler for so doing.

St. Augustine's third stipulation was, that the British bishops should co-operate with him in the conversion of the Saxons. It is not quite plain whether by this proposal St. Augustine meant to require any subjection, on the part of the British bishops, to his authority as Archbishop of Canterbury and representative in England of the Roman See ; whether, in short, he proposed that in converting the Saxons, the bishops of Britain should act *under* him, or merely *with* him. Protestant writers are accustomed to say the former, while Catholics maintain, as if controversially, the latter. The one make it a charge against the Saint that he was arrogant and imperious ; the other defend him, of course, against this charge, and consider that he waived the right with which St. Gregory had formally invested him, as a matter of spiritual policy, and for unity and charity's sake. If the latter were indeed the fact, it sets the refusal of the British bishops in this particular in all the more unfavourable light, as, in that case, to all appearance, a mere gratuitous and wholly inexcusable breach of Christian unity. If, on the other hand, St. Augustine, as Protestants say, claimed power over the British bishops in the name and on the behalf of St. Peter, this again, though it goes some way towards exculpating the refractory bishops of Britain, is, for other reasons, a serious consideration. The professors of Protestantism can afford to make such admissions without misgiving ; but the thoughtful student of ecclesiastical antiquity cannot forget that the transaction belongs to a period all but within those earlier centuries of Christianity, whose pre-

cedents the greatest divines of the Church of England have been accustomed to treat with respect and deference. It is the business of the historian or biographer, as such, in however humble a line, to exhibit facts, not to adjudicate between parties ; and it is earnestly hoped that in the present instance no departure from this principle has been consciously admitted.

At any rate, and from whatever cause, whether as a determined, and, as we may trust, conscientious assertion of independence, or, as enemies will say, in the spirit of rational exclusiveness, or in a peevish dislike of interference, or a childish love of doing things in their own way, or from any other less honourable motive, certain it is that the Britons were not disposed to retreat even so much as a single inch from the ground they had taken up. Not one point would they concede, even of the three very moderate and reasonable stipulations proposed to them ; they declined to conform either to the Catholic rule of Easter, or to the practice in respect of Baptism ; and what makes their determination more apparent, not to say their obstinacy more glaring, they absolutely refused to co-operate with a brother-bishop in the conversion of their heathen neighbours.

At length the blessed Saint, finding all his arguments ineffectual, had recourse to a different expedient for subduing the refractory Britons. He determined to commit the cause to God. Mere argument seldom, if ever, does more than to draw out controversies into shape ; prayer it is which brings men together, or causes them to take each their side. It sifts, if it fails to combine ; and ever better than "vain janglings," or hollow compacts, are even severances, which leave us free, at least, from the temptations to compromise, and the "laborious indolence" of unprofitable and inter-

minable debate. And St. Augustine had now reached this point, "*laboriosi et longi certaminis finem*,"⁶ when choice must be made between the alternatives of determining to agree, or agreeing to differ.

He accordingly closed the discussion by an invitation to prayer. The precise words of his prayer have come down to us, and it is what we should now call a "bidding" prayer. It ran as follows :—"Let us beseech God, who maketh men to be of one mind in an house, that He would vouchsafe, by heavenly notices, to put into our minds whether of these two traditions be the rather to be followed, and which be the true way of entrance for those who are seeking to hasten towards His Kingdom." And then he added :—"Let some sick be brought near, and by whosoever prayers he shall be healed, let the faith and works of that one be judged devout towards God, and an ensample for men to follow."

It was a feature in the piety of that age, or rather it is a feature of Catholic piety in every age, to believe in the doctrine of a "special Providence." This doctrine has no doubt been miserably abused by fanatics, and is liable, like all else that is distinctive of the Church, to a superstitious use at all times. That particular form of it, especially, according to which the success of a cause is made, under certain circumstances, the test of its righteousness, has shared the fate of other holy impressions of religious ages or miraculous systems ; it has outlived its generation, or travelled beyond the limits of its native soil or congenial atmosphere, and then, presenting itself among strangers, it has been ill-treated, because ill-understood, or has, perhaps, encountered at their hands some of the natural effects of an unamiable

⁶ S. Bede, H. E. lib. ii. c. 2.

decrepitude, or an insulated strangeness. The peculiar method of judicial decision entitled "Trial by Battle," which has been abolished within the memory not of the oldest amongst us, was an obsolete and misshapen relic of this family, which, like some piece of ancient furniture, beautiful in its day and in its place, had grown out of date or out of fashion, and, far from suggesting any grateful idea, or exemplifying any high principle, had come to be regarded with a sort of contemptuous wonder, as a mere antiquarian curiosity.

A parallel instance to the present history is furnished in that part of the life of St. Germanus which has entered into the present biographical sketch.⁷ St. Germanus, it will be remembered, established the Catholic Faith against heretics by the issue of the same criterion to which St. Augustine of Canterbury now appeals in vindication of the great principle of Catholic unity. St. Augustine, like St. Germanus, proposed to determine the question with his opponents by a miracle, and they, though, as we are told, with reluctance,⁸ accepted the challenge. This reluctance certainly indicated mistrust in their own cause, and reflects an unsatisfactory light on their conduct in the discussion. However, they could not but consent; and accordingly, among the multitudes whom the fame of the great Archbishop, or the report of this eventful debate, had drawn to the spot, was speedily found an eager applicant for the Divine bounty, in the person of a blind Saxon. He was taken first to the British clergy, and, upon the failure of their attempts to heal him, was brought to St. Augustine. Then the Saint, falling on his knees, entreated of the Divine goodness that He would grant eyes to the blind,

⁷ Vid. *supra*, p. 30.

⁸ *Adversarii, inviti licet, concesserunt.*

and through means of his corporeal light extend the blessings of spiritual illumination to many. Immediately his sight was restored, and the whole multitude proclaimed that Augustine was a man of God, and a preacher of the true Way. Even the Britons assented, but added that it was a hard thing to forsake the tradition of one's forefathers. The sympathies of the heart cannot at once bend to the convictions of the understanding. Who can or would wish to deny it? They asked time for deliberation, and consultation with the men in authority among them, which was readily granted. And thus terminated the first Conference of Augustinaes-ac.

CHAPTER XXI.

SECOND CONFERENCE.

THE parties separated upon the understanding that the Conference was to be renewed. The questions raised were too great to be determined at once; the British Christians could not but see that, however secondary the concessions required of them, the points in debate could not be yielded without involving very fundamental changes in their ecclesiastical condition. The proposals, at all events, had taken them in some measure by surprise; the proceedings at the first Conference had been more or less abrupt and tumultuary; the representation of their Church was inadequate; they wanted leisure for consideration, with the opportunity of taking counsel in prudent quarters, and of rallying their forces for a second and final encounter.

The British Church, notwithstanding its depression, furnished at this time specimens of the religious state both in community and in solitude. Of the former kind was the great monastery of Bancor, in Flintshire, sometimes confounded with Bangor, in Caernarvonshire. This monastery was in a very prosperous condition, being tenanted by no less than 2100 monks, drawn no doubt from the Scottish and Irish Churches in communion with the ancient British. And it seems to have been strictly ordered as well as flourishing; the monks being distributed into seven classes, who took it by turns to conduct the Divine office in choir. The name of the

abbot at this time was Dinoot or Dinoth ; and he commanded, it is said, not less by his high theological acquirements, than by his prominent station, the universal respect of the Church. He therefore was at once taken into consultation upon the important subject of the late Conference, and engaged to be present at its reassembling on a given day.

But one there was whose judgment carried yet more of oracular weight with the Church of his time. This was an ancient solitary, whose abode the Welsh reader, or the reader who is familiar with Wales, will fix, in his imagination, in some secluded glen of the Alpine district of Caernarvon or Merioneth, where placid lake or gurgling stream would furnish to the hand the scant and primitive repast, and howling winds make silence audible, and some 'giant brotherhood' of mountains seem to keep sentinel against the intrusion of the world. Little recked he of strifes and debates, of subtle questions and high controversies ; content if haply he might learn day by day to solve that one chief problem whose solution is at last the triumph of all spiritual skill, the saving of one's own soul. Each member has his own office in Christ's body ; and the work of hermits is to combat the world not by the weapons, legitimate and needful as they are, of deep penetrative wisdom and argumentative power, and dexterous ecclesiastical tact, but by the violence of prayer and the silent logic of holy living. Yet in simple times,—nay, and with guileless minds in every time, such marvels of sanctity will ever be invested with somewhat of the dignity of oracles ; the very romance which surrounds them will be favourable to their influence ; and no doubt, as compared with mere cleverness, the "harmlessness of the dove" is as much better a guide in practical matters, as, in the

same subjects, the "wisdom of the serpent" in union with that same singleness of heart and eye, is superior to both.

Our solitary of the Cambrian desert had to pay the forfeit of his great celebrity. One day, and to all appearance like other days, when dreaming, perhaps, of nothing less, his privacy was invaded by a party of grave inquirers, and his powers of discrimination taxed, as we may say, beyond all warrant, to determine a question meeter for Pope or Council, than for a private Christian like himself. Upon the issue of that question it depended whether thousands of Christians scattered in different parts of the British isles should at once be linked to the centre of unity, or remain, perhaps for centuries, to say the least, in a very equivocal position. Yet who shall deny that there is something very attractive to the imagination, and even congenial to the moral and spiritual instinct in this recourse, under circumstances of difficulty, to such a man of God? Who shall question that there is something most thoroughly unworldly about it? Who can fail to trace in it a recognition of the power of prayer, an homage to the majesty of holiness? In truth, when churches are insulated and crippled, as that of ancient Britain was, individual sanctity will be ever apt to supply the place of an ultimate authority, and its verbal expressions be accepted almost as the accents of a voice from the other world.

The response from the hermit's cell was just of the kind which might have been expected; full of sweet simplicity, and obviously wanting in practical wisdom. "If he be a man of God, follow him." "But how," rejoined the inquirers, "shall we prove that he is such?" "The Lord," was the answer, "hath said, 'Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in

heart.' And if Augustine be meek and lowly, belike he beareth Christ's yoke himself, and proposeth to you to bear it. But, contrariwise, if he be cruel and proud, then, of a surety, no man of God is he, nor do his words concern us." "But how," persisted they, "are we to know this also?" "Cause," was the answer, "that he and his come first to the place of meeting, and if he rise as you draw near, then know that he is the servant of Christ, and hear, and obey him. But if he make light of you, and forbear to rise as ye come in, being more in number, then my counsel is that ye too make light of him." Thereupon the deputies withdrew, promising compliance with the suggestion.

Truly such simplicity has almost the air of craft; this criterion of humility upon which, in the innocence of his heart, and as if for want of a better, the good hermit stumbles, savours almost of the spirit of the world. And perhaps this is not the only instance in which one Christian quality, apart from its corrective, may even wear the semblance, and work the results, of its very opposite. The moral and spiritual virtues must be balanced to prevent an overthrow. Where was it ever heard but in the courts of princes and the halls of fashion, that peace and love should be marred for the sake of an etiquette? Doubtless the Church has her "etiquettes," her minute and delicate proprieties, as well as the world; but to lay stress on them, to reckon upon them with carefulness, or to be absorbed by them, or even to think of them a second time, this belongs rather to the spirit of the world than of the Church. Little thought the apostle of England what mighty results for good or for ill depended upon the performance or neglect of that complimentary gesture.

The second Synod was conducted with far greater

solemnity than the first. The representation of the British Church was more complete, and the proceedings, it would appear, more regular. The Archbishop was attended, as on the former occasion, by SS. Melitus and Justus, who were, probably, even at that time, designated to their respective sees of London and Rochester. He came, too, in his pontifical robes, with the ensign of metropolitical rank with which he had lately been invested. On the other side there are said to have been no fewer than seven bishops, though it does not appear that more than three sees were at the time occupied in Wales; that is to say, St. David's, Elwy (afterwards St. Asaph's), and Llandaff. If more than three bishops were present, the remainder must have come from some of the adjoining counties, which were possibly at that early period included within the Welsh frontier. Historians pronounce that there was then no archbishop in Wales; Caerleon having merged in Llandaff, and the last Archbishop of Menevia having carried the pall over sea into Lesser Brittany in the year 560. Among the British deputies present at the Council was the venerable Dinoth, abbot of Bancor.

The issue of the Conference was practically determined by the mode of reception which the Archbishop of Canterbury adopted towards the representatives of the British Church. As a fact, he received them sitting. Different reasons have been assigned for this apparent discourtesy, of which that which has principally obtained is that such practice is, after all, in accordance with ecclesiastical rule. A great precedent is quoted in the case of St. Cyril at the Council of Ephesus. It is said that where a synod is conducted in due form, with the presiding bishop *in pontificalibus*, the act of rising at the entrance of each deputy would create an incon-

venient disturbance. Or it may have been that St. Augustine was an archbishop, and the delegates of the British Church merely bishops. Or, that the Archbishop of Canterbury really designed to vindicate his authority as the representative of the Holy See. Or that his mind was at the moment occupied on graver subjects than matters of external politeness, and that he thus omitted, through inadvertency, an act of proper consideration. Certain only it is that what was at worst but an excusable negligence, was taken as a serious insult. "Immediately," says the historian, "they became incensed, and esteeming it an act of haughtiness, set themselves to contradict all he said."¹ It must be acknowledged that the British bishops did themselves no credit by taking such a trifle so much to heart. The affair must strike every reasonable and candid person as simply childish; though perhaps not a little of this character is derived from the state of the times.

The calm demeanour and temperate policy of the great Archbishop, shows to advantage by contrast with the peevish and narrow-minded spirit in which his overtures were met. "Truly," was his address, "your customs are in many respects at variance with our own,—nay, with all Catholic practice. Howbeit, if you will comply with my injunctions² in three particulars, we will patiently bear with all your contrarieties to the tradition of the Church. And these three are, 1. That you will celebrate the Paschal Festival at the canonical time. 2. That you will supply, in conformity to the holy Apostolic and Roman Church, certain defects in your manner of administering the Sacrament of Baptism, wherein we are born anew to God. 3. That you will

¹ S. Bede, H. E. lib. ii. c. 2.

² Obtemperare.

join with us in preaching the Word of God to the English nation."

To this moderate request the indignant Britons replied, "We will do none of these things; moreover we will not have you for archbishop." And then turning to one another they murmured, "If he would not rise up as we entered, what chance shall we have of respect from him if we acknowledge his authority over us?"

Now it certainly does not appear that the Archbishop directly stipulated for the obedience of the British bishops. Perhaps, however, their sensitive ears caught at the word "*obtemperare*" though it certainly fell very short of a claim of universal authority. It is generally thought that their apprehensions and suspicions outran the occasion, and that they were resolved upon putting an end to the controversy at once by a gratuitous manifestation of independence, which sounds not a little like a very uncalled-for expression of disrespect. Because they would not have St. Augustine for their archbishop, they seem to have treated him almost as if he had been no bishop at all.

There is, indeed, a story which finds credit with some historians, but of which the grounds are generally confessed to be at least doubtful; according to which the answer of the British bishops was at once more definite and more respectful. It is said that by the mouth of Dinoh their prolocutor, the deputies rejoined, "That the British Churches owe the deference of brotherly kindness and charity to the Pope of Rome, and to all Christians. But other obedience than this they do not know to be due to him whom they call Pope, and, for their parts, they were under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Caerleon upon Usk who, under God, was their spiritual overseer and director."

On the ears of the present writer this document strikes as too precise and controversial for the time ; as rather savouring of anti-Catholic polemics than of primeval *naïveté*, as rather a speech written *for* the ancient Britons, and embodying its framer's views of historical probability, than as a record whose internal evidence is calculated to accredit it. Collier, indeed, accepts it upon the authority of Sir Henry Spelman, "who sets it down in Welsh, English, and Latin, and tells us he had it from Mr. Peter Mostyn, a Welsh gentleman." One serious internal objection, at all events, lies in its way, which is, that the metropolitical jurisdiction of the Welsh Church had been transferred from Caerleon upon Usk to Menevia since the time of Dubricius. It is answered that the rights of the see of Menevia were never recognized universally in the British Church, and that Caerleon still preserved a kind of traditional claim upon the deference of its suffragans. Still, it seems plain that in the time of St. Augustine the metropolitan see of Caerleon had at best but a sort of ideal existence, which it would certainly seem strange to so have pleaded in opposition to a claim so apparent and venerable as that of the See of Canterbury. On the whole it is, perhaps, safest to confine our regard to the simple and graphic narrative of our own Catholic historian.

It will have been observed that the British bishops now gave in their final refusal of St. Augustine's conditions. Some Protestant historians appear to find great difficulty in defending the Britons from the charge of indifference to the religious welfare of their Saxon neighbours. Their resistance on the points of order and custom is often thought to require but little explanation ; though, in fact, if the intensity of the schismatical spirit is at all to be measured by the insignificance

of the temptation to a breach of unity, the opposition of the British bishops on the ceremonial questions should be taken as a peculiarly decisive mark of their attachment to the principles of independence. But there is something, no doubt, which suggests even a far more painful impression of the British Church in the reluctance which its representatives manifested on the subject of the Saxon mission. The vindication set up by some writers in their behalf is in the highest degree unworthy of grave and sensible men. It is said that St. Augustine had disqualified himself from pleading the cause of the poor Saxons in the presence of the British delegates by having failed to press upon those Saxons, in the name and with the authority of the Holy See, the duty of restoring the conquered territory to its original possessors. A more remarkable instance of inconsistency and extravagance than is presented by this apology cannot well be conceived. Perhaps if there be one charge which is more commonly preferred than another against the Christian policy of Rome, it is that of her disposition to meddle in international politics. Her line of conduct in this respect is often invidiously contrasted with that of the Apostolic Church. The account of any real differences between the policy of the earlier and later Church is of course to be found in the altered circumstances of the world since the wider spread of Christianity and the reception of whole nations into the fold of Christ. But never, surely, has the Holy See departed so far from the maxims of Apostolic Christianity as to commit itself to such a system of gratuitous interference with national arrangements as would tend to throw all the rights of property into confusion, and keep the whole civilized world in a perpetual state of change and commotion. This most preposterous conception then

being done away, there really would not appear to have been any even plausible reason for the coldness with which the great Archbishop's zealous and charitable offer was received. ³

The issue of the Conference being thus disastrous as respected the interests of Catholic unity, the Archbishop rose and departed. On quitting the assembly he delivered his mind in a solemn and startling prediction. "If," said he, addressing the dissatisfied prelates in a tone which, according to his biographers, sounded like inspiration; "If you will not listen to my entreaties, now prepare yourselves for the terrors of a denunciation. I call you to peace, but you make yourselves ready to battle; bear, then, to be dealt with as enemies by those with whom you refuse to deal as brethren. You grudge your neighbours the word of eternal life. They will avenge themselves upon you by unsheathing against you the sword of temporal death."

This declaration of our great apostle has sometimes been called, rather invidiously, a *menace*. In a certain sense, no doubt, all the prophetic,—nay, and all the evangelical denunciations in holy Scripture may be so called. The Psalms of David, and even the Apostolical Epistles, contain many such menaces. Again, "Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep;" this also, with its awful concomitants, is in a certain sense a solemn and terrible threat. Every prediction of punishment,—nay, and in some sort every deprecatory warning, admits of being called a threat, and is apt to receive that name at the hands of soft-minded men.

³ It is said that the Bishop of Llandaff, who represented Caerleon also, submitted to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and that St. Oudoceus, successor of St. Theliau, who was Bishop at this time, received consecration at Canterbury from St. Augustine. Vide Ussher.

And thus, ere now, unbelievers or heretics have dared to speak of portions even of the holy Scriptures, as what they term "vindictive." Considering where such impieties have sought out their objects, and in what kind of results they have sometimes issued, it is a small thing indeed that a Saint of the Church should sustain (under whatever hopeful circumstances of invincible ignorance) such irreverent, that we may not say blasphemous, imputations. Meanwhile, the Church, of course, esteems all her chief lights to be sharers, in their measure, of the prophetic Spirit. And of them who are far less than her burning and shining lights,—of all her ordinary priests, she believes that they are clothed from on high with power to bind as well as to loose; and if so be that in this behaviour of the British Christians there were aught of wilful opposition to Divine grace, (as who shall say that there certainly was not?) it may have been that God would have them a warning to His Church, by inflicting on them some conspicuous chastisement, whereby at once others might be made more fearful of offending, and their own souls ripened for glory by one sharp and critical pang of intermediate suffering.

A sharp and stinging chastisement it was, and a conspicuous example withal. It shall be recounted in the words of St. Bede.

"Through effect of a Divine judgment, the prophecy was to the minutest particular brought to pass. For, after these things, Ethelfrid, the valiant king of the Angles, of whom we have already spoken, got together a great army, and made a mighty slaughter of this perfidious people at the city of the Legions, which the Angles call Legacaestir, but the British, more properly, Caer-legion. When, as the battle was about to begin, he saw their priests, who had met together to offer prayers for

their commander, standing apart in a place of safety, he inquired who they might be, and with what object they had assembled there. Now, very many of these priests were attached to Bancor monastery, in which there is related to have been such a number of monks, that, albeit the monastery was divided into seven portions, each portion having its immediate superior; not any one of these portions contained fewer than three hundred men, all of whom were accustomed to live by the labour of their hands. It so happened that a great party of these monks, after a three days' fast, had repaired, along with other persons, to the scene of the afore-mentioned battle with the view of offering prayers. Their protector, who guarded them while engaged in their devotions from the swords of the enemy, was one Brocmail. When king Ethelfrid was made acquainted with the reason of their coming, he cried, 'Of a truth, since these are praying to their God against us, they are fighting against us, albeit they wear no arms, since they are using against us this weapon of their imprecations.' Accordingly he bade his troops turn their arms in the very outset against these men, and so destroyed, not without great loss on his own side, the remaining forces of this hateful⁴ band. It is said that there were killed, in that engagement, of those who came to pray, about twelve hundred men, and that fifty alone were saved by flight. As for Brocmail, he and his party betook themselves to flight at the very first onset of the enemy, and left those whom he was bound to have protected, weak and defenceless, and a ready prey to the sword of the slayer. Thus was fulfilled the presage of the holy bishop Augustine, albeit himself translated to the hea-

⁴ Nefandæ.

venly courts long before. And so these traitors to the Church⁵ received the vengeance of temporal death for having despised counsels so profitable to their souls' eternal health."⁶

We have scarcely ventured to give the full force of the original, through a fear of shocking prejudices, even though by the words of another, and that other a great and famous Catholic historian. Many of those around us can ill brook the language in which Catholics describe the sin of schism. Many, also, are fain to espouse these ancient British Christians as champions of an important principle, and exemplifiers of an advantageous precedent. And of the present biographical sketches, the object is not to foment divisions, but to promote charity, and no otherwise to enforce a side in controversy, than by the impartial display of facts.

On the other hand, the ancient British Church has been the object of unfairly adverse, as well as unfairly eulogistic representations ; among which is a charge brought against it, or, at the least, a suspicion raised with respect to it, by the historian Milner, of a tendency to Pelagianism.⁷ But, indeed, it were derogatory to the work of the great St. German, to suppose that the noxious weeds of that presumptuous heresy had not long since been extirpated from British soil. And, as a fact, St. Augustine's selection of charges against the British Church on the score of merely ceremonial irregu-

⁵ Perfidi.

⁶ The words of the original are even stronger ; "*quod oblata sibi perpetuæ salutis consilia spreverunt.*"

⁷ The present writer cannot forbear, however, from paying his tribute, such as it may be, of gratitude and respect to this Protestant historian for the religious candour with which he seeks to do justice in the present, as in many other instances, to the Saints of the Church.

larity, must be taken as an acquittal upon the whole subject of doctrine. The only point of charge to create uneasiness on this score, is that which relates to Baptism ; but farther inquiry leads the present writer to hope that he was premature⁸ in supposing the irregularities which had crept into the British Church to be such as might probably affect the essence of the Sacrament. Cressy throws out a hopeful suggestion, to the effect that they more probably related to some discrepancy from the Catholic Church as to the seasons of administration, or the length of time allowed for the instruction of catechumens.

The Caerleon mentioned in the above extract from St. Bede is not Caerleon upon Usk, but Chester. As to Bancor, the seat of the great British monastery, a kind friend, thoroughly versed in the topography of Wales, and the neighbouring counties, writes to the author in the following words :—" I have no doubt that the place in question is Bangor Monachorum in the hundred of Maelor, a detached portion of Flintshire bordering on Shropshire. Bangor is a parish, lying about four miles from Wrexham, and upon the high road from thence to Whitchurch, close to the river Dee. There are, however, no traces of high antiquity in the place, and the church has been in a great measure rebuilt."

⁸ Vid. *supra*, p. 215.

CHAPTER XXII.

ST. AUGUSTINE.—HIS LATTER YEARS.

It was now made plain that St. Augustine and his companions would have to prosecute their missionary labours single-handed. And although the Saint's earthly time was rapidly drawing to its close, those labours could hardly be considered to have as yet more than begun. What has been remarked of other Saints is peculiarly true of St. Augustine of Canterbury. His characteristic work in the Church was shut up in a comparatively brief time. His life, till he had passed middle age, was hidden from the world. His ministry was comprised in little more than ten years, and of these, eventful as were all of them, the three latter would seem to have been the most critical of all. St. Augustine was in the number of those Saints who lived more than half their days to God, and but a few of them only for man, excepting indeed as none can live to God without also living for man. But can we wonder that the lives of the Saints should be miniatures, so to speak, of the life of our Blessed Lord? Of Him also we know but little till He began to be about thirty years of age. His work for men, so far as it was visible, was accomplished in little more than three years, while what may perhaps be called, without irreverence, the awful and determining crisis, was of yet shorter duration.

The circumstances of St. Augustine's later life, with the exception of some few leading facts, are involved in

a good deal of historical uncertainty. The historian whose name carries the greatest weight with critics and antiquaries, St. Bede the Venerable, sums up the period subsequent to the Second Conference with the Britons in one or two chapters. The wide interstices in St. Bede's narrative are filled up by Gocelin, but this biographer rather no doubt represents the *idea* of the Saint, upon which the Church Catholic has always fed, than admits of being substantiated by proofs satisfactory to the learned inquirer. It may perhaps be questioned whether any history can pass from the character of a mere chronicle without becoming more or less of a romance ; certainly it is not pretended with respect to these Lives that they do, or that they can, rest in each several particular upon producible evidence. All which is professed with respect to them is, that the laws by which all historical writing is regulated are not here consciously violated. Let it be considered whether the great staple of the evidence upon which all history depends is not what falls under the department of verisimilitude rather than of legal proof. And then let it also be considered, whether many of the objections made against hagiography do not ultimately resolve themselves into objections rather to the *subject-matter* than to the grounds upon which it is supported. When it is once fairly admitted that the subject is miraculous, we gain a great step towards the acknowledgment that the evidence is not untrustworthy. Still it seems but honest to inform the reader that we are now taking him off the firm basis of historical certainty which we have latterly been treading, and launching him for the moment upon a more impalpable surface, where we do not say that his footing will be less secure, but where he must expect to find less to sustain it in the mere groundwork of the argument.

Ancient biographers of St. Augustine have related, that before returning to his metropolitan see he passed some time in the western counties of England, and especially in Dorsetshire. It is in his progress from the north to the west that we suppose him to have conferred with the British delegates on the Welsh frontier. The accounts in question also represent St. Augustine's great trial as having come about in the course of his western expedition. His journey to the north was, as we have already described it, more of the nature of a triumphant progress than of a Christian mission ; though of the spirit of mortification with which it was undertaken and carried on we are not left in ignorance, from the fact of the Archbishop himself having appeared everywhere on foot, if not even, as some authorities seem to indicate, barefoot. Still there is no record, nor even tradition, of his reception in the north of England having been otherwise than favourable, and even hearty. Very different from this are the accounts of his travels in Dorsetshire. While there, we hear of his having come to one village where he was received with every species of insult. The wretched people, not content with heaping abusive words upon the holy visitors, assailed them with missiles, in which work, the place being probably a seaport, the sellers of fish are related to have been peculiarly active. Hands, too, were laid upon the archbishop and his company. Finding all efforts useless, the godly band shook off the dust from their feet and withdrew. The inhabitants are said to have suffered the penalty of their impieties even to distant generations. All the children born from that time bore, and transmitted, the traces of their parents' sin in the shape of a loathsome deformity.

At another place the missionaries are said to have

encountered still worse usage. The people, from the account, seem to have been devils in human shape. They rejected the servants of God almost in the very words in which the possessed of old repudiated the Holiest ; they said, almost in terms, " What have we to do with you ? Depart from us, we know you not." They spoke,—so the report goes—of being in league with the author of death. Some took up sharp weapons, and flew upon the defenceless missionaries ; others seized torches with the view of setting fire to them. The Saint continued to preach ; whereupon, awe-struck, the murderers paused, even as the emissaries of the high priest and elders fell to the ground at the sight of the Blessed. They paused, but only to renew their violence in another shape. Now they shot out their arrows, even bitter words. The godly admonitions of the preacher they returned by blasphemous jeers. What could he do ? From preaching he turned to prayer, and besought Christ to bring his adversaries to a better mind. No long time passed before the whole population was attacked by a dreadful and supernatural malady. Men and women, old and young, were affected with burning cancerous ulcerations of the whole body. The punishment was as universal as the sin. One cry of agony pervaded the town.

This visitation wrought blessed effects. It spoke for itself, and it made itself heard. All hearts were turned towards Augustine ; and he who was found to be among them for judgment, was felt to be among them for mercy as well. One after another they betook themselves to the archbishop and entreated his forgiveness. In the end multitudes both of men and women were baptized, and in the same blessed laver wherein their sins were washed away, the fire which raged throughout their bodies was also extinguished.

Soon afterwards St. Augustine and his comrades left the place ; and on coming to a retired spot, five miles distant, where they seemed to be “in a barren and dry land,” where were no waters of refreshment, our Lord is said to have communicated Himself to the Saint by special revelation. At the same time, as if significant of the gracious manifestation, a spring of water gushed forth, and distributing itself into various rivulets, soon converted the wilderness into a garden. St. Augustine called the place Cernel, as one where he had been vouchsafed a sight of God.¹ This spot was afterwards the site of the monastery of Cerne, or Cerne-abbas, in Dorsetshire. It is related that, at a subsequent time, an abbot of Cernel, when at the point of death, received a cure at the miraculous spring, by which St. Augustine’s great spiritual refreshment was commemorated, that Saint himself appearing to stand by the abbot’s side

¹ Malmesbury’s account is as follows :—He says that St. Augustine having converted Kent to the Christian Faith, travelled through the rest of the English provinces as far as king Ethelbert’s dominions extended, which was through all England, except Northumberland ; having arrived at Cernel, the inhabitants treated him and his companions with great rudeness, fastened the tails of rays (“*caudas racharum*”) to their garments, and drove them to a considerable distance from the place. The Saint, however, foresaw the change which was likely to ensue, and cried to his companions “*Cerno Deum qui et nobis retribuit gratiam et furentibus illis emendatiorem infundet animam.*” The people repented of what they had done, asked pardon for their conduct, and requested his return. He, imputing this change to the hand of God, gave to this place the name of Cernel, compounded of the Hebrew word *Hel*, or *El*, God, and the Latin *cerno*. The conversion of the people followed, and when water was wanting to baptize them, a spring broke out at his command. There are other interpretations. Gocelin’s account, which is followed in the text, is somewhat different. The incident of the fishes’ tails is by him connected with the visit to a different place.

as the director of his steps, and the providential instrument of blessing.²

St. Augustine having at length perambulated the whole extent of king Ethelbert's dominions, which comprised England south of Northumberland, with the exception of the extreme west, which was in the occupation of the British, at length returned to his metropolitan see, and there closed his days on earth. There is indeed a tradition of his having visited Ireland at some period of his life, and made his way to the court of king Coloman, where, as the account proceeds, he preached the Word of Life, and finally received into the Church the king, queen, and principal persons of the court. There, also, he is said to have made a convert of Livinus, who was afterwards accounted a Saint in the English Church.³

We now return into the field of authentic history. Soon after St. Augustine's re-establishment at Canterbury, Sebert, king of Essex, made overtures to king Ethelbert, on the subject of embracing the Christian Faith. Sebert, also called Seberct, or Sigebert, was the nephew of king Ethelbert, his father having married Rricula, sister of that prince. King Sebert's dominions immediately joined those of his uncle, upon whom, like all the other princes of the Heptarchy, he was dependent.

² In his way from Dorsetshire to Canterbury, St. Augustine is believed to have remained some time in the neighbourhood of Oxford. In the Bodleian Library is a MS. of not later date than the thirteenth century, containing a remarkable history of the Saint's interview at Cumnor with a priest and layman of the neighbourhood, on the subject of tithes, with miraculous circumstances which followed upon it. The story is also given in the Bollandist collection. It has been thought best to print a fac simile of this MS. in an appendix.

³ Gocelin apud Mabillon, Acta S. O. B.

King Ethelbert laid his nephew's request before the Archbishop, who answered it by sending to him Mellitus and other preachers. Not content, however, with this proof of interest, he soon repaired himself to the court of king Sebert, and baptized him with his own hands. The conversion of the king of Essex made an opening for the consecration of St. Mellitus to the bishopric of London. At the same time the foundation was laid of the two great metropolitan churches of St. Paul's and Westminster, concerning which it will fall to the biographer of St. Mellitus to speak at greater length. The same year (according to St. Bede, 604,) St. Justus was consecrated Bishop of Rochester, where king Ethelbert built and richly endowed the cathedral church of St. Andrew.

This year (604) died St. Gregory the First and Great. For many years he had suffered from great weakness of the chest and stomach, and was also afflicted with slow fevers and frequent fits of the gout, which once confined him to his bed two whole years. One of his last acts was to give to the church of St. Paul several parcels of land in order to furnish it with lights ; the act of donation is said to remain on record in the church to this day. " God called him to Himself," writes the Rev. Alban Butler, " on the 12th of March, about the sixty-fourth year of his age, after he had governed the Church thirteen years, six months, and ten days. His pallium, the reliquary he wore round his neck, and his girdle were preserved long after his death, when John the Deacon wrote, who describes his picture drawn from the life, then to be seen in the monastery of St. Andrew. His holy remains rest in the Vatican church. Both the Greeks and the Latins honour his name. The Council of Cliff or Cloveshoe, under Archbishop Cuthbert, in 747, com-

manded his Feast to be observed in all the monasteries in England, which the Council of Oxford, in 1222, extended to the whole kingdom. This law subsisted till the change of religion."

CHAPTER XXIII.

ST. AUGUSTINE.—HIS DEATH.

ST. AUGUSTINE did not long tarry behind his blessed Father in the Faith. He fell asleep in Christ either the same year with St. Gregory, or a year or two afterwards. The last great work of his life was to consecrate Laurence, one of his original companions, and one of the two who were sent to Rome in quest of fresh missionaries, his successor in the See of Canterbury; thus following the example of St. Peter, who, before his departure hence, made a like provision for the necessities of the infant Church of Rome, by ordaining St. Clement to succeed him. It is said that St. Augustine summoned to his death-bed his great benefactor, king Ethelbert, with the members of the royal family, the new Archbishop, several of the clergy, and other persons, and that he died with benedictions and exhortations on his lips. "*Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors Sanctorum Ejus!*" Oh, with what thrilling hope and bright foretastes of blessedness does the Church accompany such a soul as this in its passage to the fulness of joy! What sweetness and what power does the death of the just impart to those words of comfort, which the Church denies not to an ordinary faithful! "May the bright company of the angels meet thy soul as it leaves the body; may the conclave of the Apostles, who shall judge the world, come to receive thee; may the triumphal army of the martyrs go forth to greet thee; may the liliated band of

confessors, shining with glory, encompass thee ; may the chorus of virgins hail thee with songs of joy ; and mayest thou be held fast, deep in the blessings of peace, in the bosom of the patriarchs. May Christ Jesus cast on thee His mild and festive look, and, in the company of those who stand near him, acknowledge thee as His own for ever! Let God arise, and let His enemies be scattered ; let them also that hate Him flee before Him. Like as the smoke vanisheth, so shalt Thou drive them away ; and like as wax melteth at the fire, so let the ungodly perish at the presence of God. But let the righteous be glad and rejoice before God. . . . Let all the legions of hell be confounded and put to shame, nor let the ministers of Satan dare to oppose thy passage. May Christ deliver thee from everlasting death, who deigned to die for thee. May Christ, the Son of the Living God, place thee in the midst of the ever-verdant gardens of His Paradise, and may He, the true Shepherd, acknowledge thee among His sheep. May He absolve thee from all thy sins, and place thee at His own right hand among the number of His elect. Mayest thou see thy Redeemer face to face, and, standing for ever by His side, mayest thou behold with happy eyes His Truth in all its brightness. Mayest thou be ranged with the multitudes of the blessed, and enjoy the sweetness of the vision of God for ever and ever.”¹

His body is buried in peace ; his name liveth for evermore. Such is the portion of the blessed Saints in the Church on earth, while their immortal spirit is received at once into the courts above, to re-enter its glorified tabernacle at the resurrection of the just. The sacred ashes of St. Augustine were deposited in a

¹ Ordo Commendationis Animæ secundum Breviarium Romanum.

grave as near as might be to the unfinished church of St. Peter and St. Paul at Canterbury, waiting the completion of the fabric. When the church was at length capable of receiving them, they were removed within the northern porch, which from that time became the burying-place of all future archbishops of Canterbury till the time of Theodore and Berthwald, who were buried further within the church, the porch being then full. The church of St. Peter and St. Paul, which was an appendage to the monastery dedicated under the same title, and afterwards St. Augustine's, was completed, according to Thorn, in 613, in which year the body of St. Augustine was interred in its portico. In the midst of it, as St. Bede relates, was an altar sacred to St. Gregory the Great, at which every Saturday Mass was said in commemoration both of St. Gregory and St. Augustine, by a priest specially chosen for that office. At the Council of Cloveshoe, in 747, it was directed that due honours should be paid to the days both of St. Augustine's nativity and of his death.

His tomb bore the following simple inscription in the days of St. Bede.

“Here resteth the Lord Augustine, first Archbishop of Canterbury, who erewhile was sent hither by blessed Gregory, Bishop of the City of Rome, and, being helped by God to work miracles, drew over king Ethelbert and his race from the worship of idols to the Faith of Christ. Having ended in peace the days of his ministry, he departed hence seven days before the kalends of June (May 26), in the reign of the same king.”

The remains of St. Augustine were afterwards, as we have said, removed into the north porch of the cathedral of Christ Church, which, in 759, received the body of

Archbishop Cuthbert, and continued to be the burying-place of the archbishops of Canterbury till the change of religion. On the 6th of September, 1091, Abbot Wido translated the chief part of the relics into the interior of the church, leaving the remainder in the porch. Those which were translated lay for some time in a strong urn under the east window. In 1221, the head was put into a rich shrine ornamented with gold and precious stones ; the rest of the bones lay in a marble tomb, enriched with fine carvings and engravings, till the dissolution.² The history of the Translation has been written at length by Gocelin, the biographer of St. Augustine.

² Rev. A. Butler.

CHAPTER XXIV.

POSTHUMOUS MIRACLES.—CONCLUSION.

ST. AUGUSTINE's biographer, Gocelin, has left a book on Miracles wrought since the death of the Saint through the power of his relics or by the help of his intercessions. The readers of these Lives have not to be told now, for the first time, that the Church Catholic has ever accounted a singular virtue to reside in the bodies of Saints, the temples of the Holy Ghost, even after the spirit has left them to return to God who gave it. Holy Scripture distinctly warrants this comfortable belief; for if the bones of one of the elder prophets were gifted with the power of conveying life to the dead,¹ how much more should miraculous virtue be expected to cleave to the relics of those blessed shrines in which the Holy Ghost has dwelt in all the largeness of measure which is promised under the Gospel! A wonderful and glorious truth is contained in that promise, of which the Athanasian Creed is the vehicle to the Church of all ages, "*Omnes homines resurgere habent cum corporibus suis.*" These very bodies of ours, and not merely the souls which inhabit them, are gifted with immortality, the especial fruit, as Catholic writers tell us, of participation in Christ through the Sacrament of His most blessed Body and Blood. But if a certain sanctity inhere in all the

¹ 2 Kings xiii. 21.

bodies of the dead in Christ, as essentially the very same with which they shall rise again at His Coming, what shall be thought of the bodies of the Saints, which, even in this life, have been purified as by fire from the dross of corruption, and are the terrestrial correspondents of souls now with Christ in Heaven? Often they are related upon competent testimony to have been miraculously preserved from decay; Almighty God thus giving a token to them that fear Him of the power by which He will finally re-unite the scattered portions of consecrated dust, so as to maintain the integrity of each tabernacle which His Spirit has once pervaded.

Hence, not only the relics of the Saints, but the very neighbourhoods of the spots where they rest, have ever been looked upon as instinct with miraculous life. As for the great Apostle of the English, almost more wonders are related of him after his death than before it; which, should it prove to be a fact, would be quite in keeping with all experience. For how commonly is it felt even with respect to eminent Christians short of the Saints of the Church, and with respect also to influences short of what would be generally termed miraculous, that their power upon the world almost dates from the termination of their visible connexion with it! Death seems, in a most mysterious way, the period of their birth into life; not merely their own true life, which was here but hidden and interrupted, but even their life in this world. Neither for themselves, nor even for others, do they often seem to have lived to good purpose till the veil of flesh has been withdrawn. Their *name* has a power about it which their words and actions seemed to lack; and what is the posthumous virtue of the Saints, but an exemplification of the same principle?

These and the like considerations will prepare even

the more sceptical to receive, at least with attention and reverence, the testimony of the biographer Gocelin to the miracles wrought at the tomb, or through the intercessions of St. Augustine. And when it is borne in mind that he was not far from contemporary with some of these events, and that his report of them admitted of easy refutation, his testimony should not seem untrustworthy even according to the ordinary laws of historical evidence. Thus, as to the very first of the miraculous stories which Gocelin relates, the date of the transaction to which it belongs is 1011, and Gocelin lived at the end of the same century. His account of it, too, was put forth at Canterbury, on the very spot where the miracle is said to have happened. The story is narrated by Thorn, who was Abbot of St. Augustine's, and will be found at pp. 137-8 of the present biography.

Gocelin likewise recounts the following, among other miracles, as having taken place at the tomb of St. Augustine of Canterbury, or under the immediate power of his patronage.

A Saxon, named Leodegarius, had been afflicted from his birth with dreadful contractions of the joints of his body, so as almost to resemble a monster rather than a human being. He is said to have passed many years of his life in moving, or rather creeping, from place to place, for, in truth, he wore the appearance of a reptile. He was a native of Germany, whence he had found his way to Rome, in hopes of benefiting by the prayers of some Saint. At length he came to England, and, one day, while watching during the night in the Abbey of St. Peter, at Westminster, he felt himself moved, by a Divine intimation, to seek help in the city of Canterbury.

The next morning found him on his way to the metropolitan city, which he is said to have reached, by taking ship at Greenwich, where, it seems, vessels were stationed for conveying the poor at the public charge.² On arriving at Canterbury, a pious matron took pity on him, and provided him with board and lodging for the night. The next day, under her guidance, he repaired to the cathedral, and there, through the intervention of his charitable hostess, was admitted within the sanctuary, or precincts of the high altar. In this place he spent three nights in prayer. On the fourth morning he met with the reward of his perseverance. There appeared to him (as he related) three venerable figures, of patriarchal aspect and mien, bright as angels. The central figure was much taller than the others. His hair was white as snow, and seemed to take the form of a cross upon his ample forehead; his eyes beamed with sweetness, and his whole countenance was radiant and smiling. A priestly robe covered his person, so gorgeous that it seemed to rival the glory of Solomon, and it was confined at the waste by a clasp of gold. In his hand was a cross of great size and dazzling brilliancy. His companion on the right was of middle stature, with eyes of remarkable brightness, and a forehead like snow. On his left was one of dwarfish size, as is recorded of him who desired to receive Christ into his house;³ but his form was one of perfect symmetry and exquisite beauty. One and all were attired in vestments so rich and magnificent, that earth till then had never seen the like. The three strangers were observed to make for the spot where the poor cripple, with his limbs gathered up, was lying on the pavement. His infirmity was of such a

² Navis Eleemosynaria.

³ Luke xix. 3.

kind as to render variety of posture impracticable; standing, sitting, lying, and kneeling, were all alike to him.

On reaching him the strangers suddenly paused. The poor helpless creature gazed on them with an awe which came near to terror. At length the central priest beckoned to his companion on the left, to signify to the cripple that they came as ministers of mercy. He approached him and said, it was blessed Augustine who had come to heal him. Hardly had the name of Augustine passed his lips when the other seemed to hear God speaking to him, and addressing himself to the chief visitor, "It is you," he said, "most clement father, whom I seek; you, of all the Saints, a Divine voice has told it me, are to be my deliverer." Thereupon St. Augustine deputed his two companions to exercise the gift of healing, and they proceeded to lift him up, the one applying the hand of power to the upper part of his body, the other implanting strength in his knees and ankle-bones. The cure is described as more painful than the malady. While it was in progress (for it was not instantaneous) the poor man, as we read, cried out lustily for mercy. At length his body, which had been a mass of disease and deformity, assumed its natural shape, and the three wonderful benefactors disappeared in the direction of their several tombs. Meanwhile, the sacristan and keepers of the church, who had been aroused from their sleep by cries of distress proceeding from the sanctuary, had repaired to the spot, where to their astonishment they found the poor man, whose hapless condition they had commiserated the day before, in the full possession of health and activity. He related to them the circumstances of his visit to Canterbury, and of his interview with the wonderful strangers; and learned that the three shrines from which they had appeared to

issue, and among which his eyes had afterwards lost them, were those of St. Augustine and his two companions, St. Laurence, and St. Mellitus. These, then, were the strangers on right and left.

A great number of the miraculous narratives of which St. Augustine of Canterbury is the subject, have their scene on the wide ocean. In these civilized times when the art of navigation is in so advanced a state that a long sea voyage is hardly more dangerous and anxious than a journey on land, we can form no idea of the light in which even a passage across the British Channel would be regarded in the middle ages by any but those who had been trained to a seafaring life from their infancy. Even now it is commonly said that there is a wonderful power about a sea life in making men religious, or in keeping them so, especially in the case of those who have experience of it in its rougher shapes. Who has not heard of the "superstitions" of sailors? Who that has visited Catholic countries abroad, has not observed, in sea-port towns, the Christian counterpart of the "*votiva tabella*" of Horace, in the ships and other specimens of nautical ingenuity hung up in churches as a perennial memento of deliverance, an offering in honour of that blessed one, whom the Catholic mariner delights to hymn as the mild and auspicious "*Star of ocean*;"³ and in our own England too, although the larger sea-port towns are, for want of some powerful religious check, for the most part, it is to be feared, very dens of iniquity, yet the case is said to be much otherwise in the little fishing-towns scattered along the coast, at a distance from the metropolis, the male portion of the population of which are for weeks out at sea, in open

³ "*Ave maris Stella*," &c.

boats, at the constant risk of their lives. In many of these places the men are said to be, as a body, so naturally religious that it is rather the attempt to eradicate, than to implant, devout impressions which is apt to fail of success. "They that go down to the sea in ships and occupy their business in great waters; these men see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep."⁵ The changeful ocean and the tranquil sky are, to simple and affectionate hearts, better than many sermons. "*Mirabiles elationes maris, mirabilis in altis Dominus.*"⁶ And very deeply plunged in the mire of sin must that soul be, which the astonishing "providences" of a sea life do not arouse from its torpor, and lift up, though but for a moment, to Heaven.

It should not then be difficult for any one to enter into the wonderful religious experiences, of which, seven centuries ago, the sea was continually felt to be the place, and its incidents the medium. Many a hair-breadth escape and unlooked-for intervention which, even in these days, would go by the name of a providence, was then referred directly to the class of miracles. Indeed there is a kind of miracle for which the word "providence" is but a synonyme, convenient for the purposes of reserve; and it will be readily understood that wherever the doctrine of the Communion of Saints is vividly realized, and their patronage regarded as an effectual help, signal deliverances will come to be viewed as the fruit of direct interpositions.

Among those with which the name of St Augustine of Canterbury was connected, a foremost place is given by Gocelin to the wonderful preservation of king Canute from perils of the sea, on his return from his

⁵ Ps. cvii. 23, 24, &c.

⁶ Ps. xcii. 6. (Vulg.)

great pilgrimage to Rome. A terrible storm is said to have overtaken him when he was just within sight of the English shore. He betook himself to St. Augustine, whose favour he had experienced throughout his travels, and vowed large gifts to his shrine. Soon after, the storm ceased, and the vessel got safe to shore.

A somewhat similar intervention was vouchsafed in the case of Egelvius, abbot of Ethelingey, who had also been to Rome to pay his devotions at the tomb of the Apostles. On his return home, he and his companions were detained six full weeks by contrary winds, during which time their money was all expended in the purchase of necessaries, and they were obliged to sell their horses and apparel. At length one of the party, a monk, named Withgar, of age and prudence, encouraged the Abbot to look for help from the guardianship and intercessions of his island Saints, and besought him to implore their good offices. The Abbot complied, and chiefly betook himself to St. Augustine, who held a first place among the holy patrons of England, vowing that should he ever again be granted a sight of his loved abbey, he would erect from the foundation a tower to the honour of God, under his tutelage. Then falling asleep, there appeared to him a ship rapidly approaching him, in which was one of priestly dignity and heavenly beauty, clad in shining vestments, who waved his hand to the home-sick pilgrims as if inviting them to him. Then the Abbot awoke, and while he was relating the vision to his companion, the pilot rushed in full of joy, with the tidings that a favourable breeze had sprung up, and that no time was to be lost. The ship reached England in safety. The Abbot, upon his arrival, repaired to Canterbury, where the hospitable successor of our Saint received him with open arms,

and like a worthy steward of the bounty of such a father, set himself to make good the losses of his guest.

The good Abbot was faithful to his vow, and laid the foundation of his tower. He obtained, not without difficulty, six great beams ; the seventh, long refused, was at last given for love of the Saint. When they came to measure it, it was found half a yard too short ; and the Abbot, not without hope that the Saint might once more grant him his aid, measured it again, and found it now as much too long as it had been before too short. His workman was about to make it the right length ; but this the Abbot would by no means allow, as esteeming it a disrespect to the Saint's overflowing bounty, of which he decided that the tower should remain a monument to future generations. The biographer adds that it was standing in his time.

One more history shall be related under the same head. Elfnoth, a member of one of the principal families in London, had been brought up from his childhood in St. Augustine's under the care of Abbot Ulfric. He had been staying in Normandy with Duke William, and was on his return to England, when, midway across the Channel, a storm arose. The ship was wrecked, and all perished, with the single exception of young Elfnoth, who ceased not to call on his holy father for help ; when, at length descrying a broken mast in the water, he threw himself upon it and there remained, the sport of the waves. His faith was tried for two whole days and nights ; the third morning dawned in serenity, and he was rescued from death by a friendly vessel from the Norman coast.

Gocelin also speaks of certain monks of St. Augustine's, contemporaries of his own, and alive when he wrote, who had made the following statement upon their oaths.

On a certain year, about Pentecost, they were on their way from Constantinople to Venice, and had on board 150 men, many of them learned clergy and laymen, besides a number of others. The wind rose, and became so strong as to endanger a vessel thus heavily laden. They took in their sails, and, availing themselves of the first anchorage they found, remained for several days exposed to the violent beating of the waves. It so happened, in the year in question, that the festival of St. Augustine fell during Whitsuntide, and various were the feelings under which the holy brethren looked forward to its near approach at so trying and anxious a time. On the one hand, it was a grief to them that they must celebrate it to such disadvantage; on the other, they could not but esteem it providential that a season so full of promise should befall at such a moment. It happened that on board were several Greeks as well as Italians, and it was a great delight to the holy brethren to spend the mean season in recounting to them the history of the Saint whose day was coming on. They told how the illustrious Gregory, Augustine's spiritual father, had been connected with those very parts, having lived for some time at Constantinople in the capacity of nuntio of the Apostolic See; and how, out of his great charity to the English nation, he had sent this Augustine to preach Christ among them. With such delightful converse did they beguile the weary time; and at length the whole party on board were wrought into a kind of enthusiasm at the prospect of honouring God in Augustine, spiritual child of Gregory, and apostle of the English nation. They added, that among all the Saints of their own country, there was not one so powerful in his intercession, so large in his munificence, as blessed Augustine; neither did they doubt that, should the

crew join in commemorating him with a holy unanimity, some mighty deliverance might be expected to follow. The next Sunday was the day of his festival, and whatever outward accompaniments of ceremonial splendour there lacked, were more than supplied by the overflowing joy of the heart. The Vespers of the Saint were chanted by the numerous body of priests and clerics, all the crew assisting at the service, and then the night was spent in watching, with prayer and praise. But the narrative must be continued in the glowing words of the biographer. "The ship was our church, its mast the watch-tower of Sion; the sail-yard our cross, the sails our drapery, the prow our altar, the priest, boatswain, the arch-priest, pilot, the rowers clerics; the creaking cables our instruments of music, the whistlings of the wind our bellows and pipes. Around us were the spacious courts of ocean, and the countless multitude of the waves responded to the voice of the chanters by their incessant dashings. The church of the waters resounded with the note, 'O ye seas and floods, bless ye the Lord, bless Him O ye whales and all that move in the waters,' and the waters joined in the response with the quires above; all sang of Christ in high solemnity, and of Augustine, servant of Christ."

Lauds were chanted towards daybreak, and then all retired to rest except the helmsman. He remained observing the stars, and trying the wind. On a sudden it came home to him that St. Augustine's agency had been blessed. The violent wind subsided into the softest of breezes, and that a favourable one. He blew his whistle and shouted aloud, and for a moment the sleepers doubted whether all were not over. But a moment after they were greeted with the joyful words; "Up, comrades; God is with us;" and the pilot continued, "It

is St. Augustine, whose Feast we are keeping; he is helmsman, boatswain, master, and all." All were speedily on the alert, and Mass was sung in high jubilee.

Gocelin relates many other histories of the same description. One more only shall be selected. In the village of Chilham, not far from Canterbury, was a little girl, eight years of age, the hope and comfort of a widowed mother. She was the life and spirit of her home; but some sad chance befel her, by which she lost the power of speech. Her mother, instead of having recourse to a human physician, took her to the parish priest, by name Elfelm, who addressed her as follows:—"The Feast of St. Augustine is at hand; go then and prepare a waxen taper, and with it watch out the vigil of that day, whereon the Day-spring from on high first visited us; and let your child be the companion of your prayers. If you will but persevere in faith, we verily believe that, through God's goodness, you will not be disappointed. The devout matron, armed with faith, and as at the bidding of an angel, is ready with the light on the appointed day, and repairs with her child to the shrine of her heavenly physician, where both keep vigil in prayer before the health-giving pledges of the Saint. The mother prays and utters her complaints aloud; the daughter can but sigh and vent her devotion and her grief in low inarticulate sounds: but the ears of the Saint are open to both. Now swell on high, at the close of matins, the solemn words of the hymn to the Thrice-Holy, the Abbot entoning the first notes, and his children of the monastery taking up the strain in chorus. When they came to the words, 'The Holy Church throughout all the world doth acknowledge Thee,' the tongue of the damsel was suddenly loosened, and she was able to bear her part in the chorus of the

Universal Church. Matins and Lauds being ended, the whole company repeated *Te Deum* as an act of praise to God for the mercies whereof all had just been witnesses.

And now what remains but humbly to trust that our Lord will turn a pitying eye on our much-loved England, and hear the prayers of her patrons and benefactors in her behalf, that her children may once more "look unto the Rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were digged?"¹... "O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee.... O Lord, according to all Thy righteousness, we beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain : because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of Thy servant and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake. O my God, incline Thine ear and hear ; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city that is called by Thy name ; for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousness, but for Thy great mercies. O Lord, hear ; O Lord, forgive ; O Lord, hearken and do ; defer not, for Thine own sake,...for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy name."

"O God, Thou hast cast us out, and scattered us abroad : Thou hast also been displeased ; O turn Thee

¹ Isaiah li. 1.

unto us again....Thou hast moved the land and divided it : heal the sores thereof, for it shaketh. Thou hast shewed Thy people heavy things ; Thou hast given us a drink of deadly wine."

"O remember not our old sins, but have mercy upon us, and that soon, for we are come to great misery. Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of Thy name : O deliver us for Thy name's sake. Wherefore do the heathen say, Where is now their God ?...O let the sorrowful sighing of the prisoners come before Thee ; according to the greatness of Thy power preserve Thou those that are appointed to die....So we that are Thy people, and the sheep of Thy pasture, shall give Thee thanks for ever ; and will alway be shewing forth Thy praise from generation to generation." ² Amen.

² Dan. ix. ; Ps. lx., lxxix.

APPENDIX.

[The following account of the MS., of which a facsimile is printed below, is given by a learned Member of the University of Oxford.]

The MS. in the Bodleian (from the library of Kenelm Digby) is of the thirteenth century, and early in it. The story is quoted from a Life of St. Augustine. I have collated the first with the copy in the Life of St. Thomas of Canterbury, which is a later MS. The two are not, I think, copies of the same individual MS., but they are from the same general text. However, the original must be older than the older one of the two. There is another copy in the Library of University College.

E CODICE K. DIGBÆI 149.

IN VITA BEATI AUGUSTINI ANGLORUM APOSTOLI DE
EXCOMMUNICATIONE PRO DECIMIS.

Est vicus in agro Oxfordensi vi. miliaris distans a loco hac tempestate celebri qui dicitur Wodestoke Cumetoria nomine. Igitur cum beatus Augustinus Divini Verbi semina ex more gentibus erogando pervenisset, accessit ad eum ejusdem villæ presbyter, dicens; Reverende pater et domine suggero sanctitati tuæ quod hujus fundi dominus multimoda a me exhortatione commonitus, nullatenus adquiescit, ut sanctæ Dei ecclesiæ ex hiis quæ superna ei confert largitas decimas

velit persolvere, et excommunicationis insuper sententiam sepissime in eum jacula[ri] comminatus, eo amplius rebellem et obstinatum reperi. Provideat ergo sanctitas vestra quid inde facturum sit. Quod audiens Sanctus Augustinus precepit militem accersiri ante se. Cui et dixit, Quid hoc fili quod audio de te? Cur decimas tuas Deo omnium bonorum largitori et sancte ecclesie reddere recusas? An ignoras quia decimæ non tue sed Dei sunt? Prompto ergo et libenti animo et cum gratiarum actione Deo omnipotenti debitum persolve, ne anno sequenti unde tribuas pro obstinatione tua severa districti judicis tibi subtrahat sententia. Ad hoc miles iracundie stimulis agitatus viro Dei respondit. Quis inquit domine terram excoluit? Quis semen ad serendum præstitit? vel fruges jam ad maturitatem perventas metere fecit? Nonne ego? Hoc igitur noverint omnes, quia ejus erit decimus manipulus cujus erunt et novem. Cui Sanctus Aug^s. Noli inquit fili ita loqui, non enim ignorare te volo quod si fidelium consuetudinem sanctorum patrum traditionem decimas tuas dare recusaveris, absque dubio excommunicabo te. Et hiis dictis conversus ad mensam Dominicam ut misteria divina celebraret, coram omni populo clara voce dixit, Ex parte Dei præcipione aliquis excommunicatus missarum solemniis [al. solemniis] interesse præsumat. Quod cum dixisset, res miranda et retro acta et [al. retroactis] inaudita seculis contigit. Nam in ipso introitu ecclesie cadaver sepultum se erigens atque cimiterium egrediens ibidem stabat immobile quamdiu sanctus vir missarum solemnia celebrabat. Quibus expletis fideles qui ibi præsentés erant fere extra se positi venerunt ad beatum pontificem et rem gestam trementes ex ordine pandunt. Quibus ait, Nolite pavere, sed præcedat nos cum

aqua a nobis consecrata crucis Dominicæ vexillum, et videamus quid hoc sit quod nobis ostensum est. Precedens autem pius pastor oves Christi pavefactas pervenit cum eis ad ingressum cimiterii, vidensque cadaver tetrum et deforme sic inquit, Precipio tibi in nomine Domini quatenus indices mihi quis sis, ut [al. vel] cur ad illudendum populum Christi huc veneris. Cui respondit, Non ad terrorem huic populo incutendum, vel ut eis illuderem sanctissime pater Augustine huc veni; sed cum ex parte Dei juberet ne aliquis excommunicatus missarum solempniis interesset, angeli Domini qui itineris tui assidue comites assistunt ejece- runt me de loco ubi positus fueram sepultus, dicentes, quod amicus Dei Augustinus carnes fetentes de ecclesia jussisset proici. Ego enim tempore Britonum, antequam gentilium Anglorum furor hanc vastasset regionem, hujus ville patronus fui, etiam licet sepius ab hujus ecclesie presbitero commonitus fueram, tamen dare decimas meas nunquam consensi. Ad ultimum vero excommunicationis ab eo mulctatus sententia me miserum inter hoc de medio sublatus sum et quia in eis nullus resistere potuit in loco de quo surrexi intra ecclesiam sepultus, animam ad claustra infernalium gehennalibus jugiter cruciendam incendiis emisi. Tunc flentibus omnibus qui aderant et hoc audierant ipse sanctus lacrimis faciem ubertim irrorans crebrisque singultibus dolorem cordis ostendens, Scis inquit locum ubi sepultus fuit presbiter qui te excommunicavit? Quo respondente quod bene sciret, et quod in eodem cimiterio monumentum haberet, dixit archiepiscopus, Precede ergo nos et nobis locum demonstra. Precessit igitur defunctus veniensque ad locum quendam prope ecclesiam ubi omnino nullum adhuc signum alicujus sepulturæ apparebat, sequente se Au-

gustino populoque universo clara voce dixit, Ecce locus, hic si placet fodite et presbiteri de quo me interrogatis ossa poteritis invenire. Ex jussu ergo pontificis ceperunt quidam fodere, et tandem in alto defosso loco pauca invenerunt ossa et ipsa præ temporis diurnitate in viriditatem conversa. Sciscitante autem Dei servo si hæc essent presbiteri ossa, respondit defunctus, Etiam domine. Tunc Sanctus Augustinus fusa diutius oratione dixit, Ut cognoscant omnes quia mors et vita in manibus Dei sunt cui nichil est impossibile in ejus nomine dico Frater surge opus enim te habemus. Res stupenda, et humanis auribus inaudita, ad jussionem enim almissimi præsulis videbant omnes qui aderant pulverem pulveri uniri et ossa nervis compaginari, ac sic demum humanum corpus de sepulcro amotum erigi. Cumque ante beatum virum staret, Cognoscis, inquit, istum frater? Qui respondit, Novi pater, et utinam non nossem. Et adjecit almificus præsul, Tu eum anathemate ligasti? Ligavi, ait, et digne pro meritis. In omnibus enim sanctæ ecclesie semper rebellis extitit decimarum retentor, multorum insuper flagitiorum usque ad diem ultimum patrator. Tunc vir Dei Augustinus altius ingemiscens, Nosti, inquit, frater, quia miserationes Dei super omnia opera ejus. Unde et nos misereri simul et compati oportet creaturæ et imagini Dei, que ejus pretioso redempta sanguine tam longo jam tempore tenebroso reclusa in carcere penas sustinuit gehennales. Tunc tradidit ei flagellum, et flexis ante illum genibus absolutione flebiliter petita, mortuus mortuum magno gratie Dei dono ad declarandum servi Augustini merita relaxavit. Quo absoluto præcepit sanctus pater noster ut sepulcrum rediens in pace diem præstolaretur ultimum. Qui statim ad locum unde surrexisse visus est reversus mausoleum intravit,

in cinereamque pulverem protinus est resolutus. Tunc ait presbitero sanctus. Quantum tempus est ex quo hic jacuisti? Qui respondit c. l. [centum quinquaginta anni] et eo amplius sunt. Quomodo, inquit, huc usque fuisti? Bene ait in gaudio Domini mei constitutus, eterne vite deliciis interfui. Visne ait ut communem pro te exorem Dominum quatenus ad nos iterum revertaris, simulque animas diabolica fraude deceptas evangelii nobiscum verba serendo ad suum Creatorem reducas? Absit, inquit, a te venerabilis pater ne me a quiete mea perturbatum ad seculi laboriosam simulque erumpnosam reverti facias vitam. O magna et plena de Dei misericordia præsumptio. O gloriosa præcellentissimi cordis conscientia que Deum ita potentem et misericordem et de Deo tantum promeruisse non dubitavit ut tam magnificum tamque stupendum pro eo facere dignaretur miraculum. Hoc forte illi videbitur incredibile qui Deo aliquid esse impossibile credit. Sed tamen nulli dubium est quod nunquam Anglorum dure cervices Christi jugo subjici nisi per magna consenserunt miracula. Porro Sanctus Augustinus, presbitero non consentiente hujus vite vias iterum ingredi, dixit, Vade karissime frater, et per longa annorum tempora quiesce in pace. Simulque ora pro me et pro universa sancta Dei ecclesia. Qui statim sepulcrum intrans favilla et cinis effectus est. Tunc accersivit ad se militem sanctus episcopus cui et dixit, Quid est fili. Adhuc decimas tuas Deo reddere consentis? An adhuc in obstinacia tua perdurare disponis? Tremefactus autem miles procidit ad pedes ejus flens et ejulans, et reatum suum confitens et veniam petens. Relictisque omnibus komam disposuit. Beatum Augustinum omnibus diebus vite sue tanquam salutis sue auctorem secutus in omnibus; mentis et corporis puritate consummatus diem clausit

ultimum, et eterne felicitatis gaudia sine fine victurus intravit. Quod nobis præstare dignetur IHS KPS Dominus noster Qui cum P̄re et S̄pu Sancto vivit et regnat Deus in secula seculorum.—Amen.

THE END.

LONDON :

Printed by S. & J. BENTLEY, WILSON, and FLEY,
Bangor House, Shoe Lane.







